







## **KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY**



# KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

*The Influence of the Barthian Movement Upon  
the Churches of the World*

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TO THE EDITORS  
OF THE BIBLIOTHECA SACRA,  
THE OLDEST THEOLOGICAL REVIEW IN AMERICA,  
IN RECOGNITION OF THEIR ECUMENICAL INTEREST  
IN THE BARTHIAN THEOLOGY  
THIS TRANSLATION IS DEDICATED.



## INTRODUCTION

DR. KELLER, whose book, *Der Weg der dialektischen Theologie durch die kirchliche Welt*, here appears in English translation, is equipped as few men are to understand the swirling currents in the life of the churches today. Born in Switzerland, he studied as a graduate student in Germany, and served for some years as teacher and preacher in Cairo, Egypt. He was pastor of important churches in Geneva and Zurich. He had much to do with the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work held at Stockholm in 1925, and with the World Conference on Faith and Order held in Lausanne in 1927. Since 1926 he has been one of the General Secretaries of the Continuation Committee appointed by the Stockholm Conference, having as his particular care the work of the International Social Institute, with headquarters at Geneva. He has been the representative in Europe of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, and he has made many trips across the Atlantic and has been warmly welcomed in American churches and institutions of learning. Upon the recommendation of the Faculty of the Divinity School, Yale University conferred

## INTRODUCTION

upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1927; and he has been similarly honored by the Universities of Geneva and Edinburgh.

All these facts are worth setting down, not simply that English-speaking readers may know more about the man who has written this book, but because the book itself is the fruit of the author's wide contacts and experience. He knows the churches of Europe and America at first hand. Taking the theology of Barth and his associates as a point of departure, or as a sort of "theological sextant," to use his own phrase, Dr. Keller presents in this volume a most informing and stimulating picture of the contemporary situation in the life and thought of the Christian churches.

I hope that this book will be widely read by Christian ministers and laymen on this side of the Atlantic. It will help us to understand the tremendous differences at present between Christian thought in America and in continental Europe; and by helping us to understand our differences it will put us in a position to stress more fully our essential agreements. Those who have lately been stirred by the Report of the Laymen's Foreign Missions Inquiry will find quite new food for thought in the Barthian critique as described in chapter seven. Those who think of Christian unity as a simple matter, to be attained by the easy method of forgetting differences, will be led to a truer appreciation of the complexity and difficulty of the situation. Yet here is no counsel of despair.

## INTRODUCTION

Dr. Keller writes from an ecumenical point of view, and his book is a positive contribution to the furtherance of the ecumenical movement throughout the world.

LUTHER A. WEIGLE.

Yale University,  
The Divinity School.



## TRANSLATORS' FOREWORD

THIS book is a translation of *Der Weg der dialektischen Theologie durch die kirchliche Welt. Eine kleine Kirchenkunde der Gegenwart*, Chr. Kaiser Verlag, Munich.

Our sincere gratitude is due to Dr. Harold Buschman for his reading of the manuscript and for his numerous valuable suggestions.

The publication of this translation of Dr. Keller's book is, we believe, particularly timely. Barthianism raises an "existential" question and has a message which is of deep interest to English-speaking Christianity at this moment. America, in particular, is beginning to feel the sledge-hammer of the "Prophet of the Absolute" whom "God has let loose upon the world."<sup>1</sup> In this pregnant historical moment, Dr. Keller's illuminating presentation of Barthianism's astounding progress through Christendom is not only a splendid and necessary supplement to Birch Hoyle,

<sup>1</sup> Petermann, "German Trends Towards Irrationalism," *The New Humanist*, 1930. "Trends Towards the Irrational in America," *The New Humanist*, 1931. Review of Wilhelm Pauck's "Karl Barth," in *The New Humanist*, 1932. "The Social Gospel in the Theology of Crisis," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 1931. Cf. also his remarks on "The Social Note of Barthianism" in *The Christian Century*, 1931. "Buecher der Krisistheologie in Amerika," *Christliche Welt*, 1930. "The Meaning of Life," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 1932.

## TRANSLATORS' FOREWORD

McConnachie, Zerbe and Pauck, but also a discussion appealing particularly to the empirical English and the pragmatical American mind.

There is, however, another significant aspect to this volume. We are living in an ecumenical age. The same vital problems and movements are "upsetting the whole world" ("oikumene") and "have come here too" (Acts 17:6). We have our ecumenical conferences, extending from Stockholm to Jerusalem, and yet, in our country, a very important element is still lacking, namely, the academic educational means through which to present and cultivate this recent and promising aspect of modern Christianity. Our theological institutions should, therefore, introduce into their curricula a special department with courses and seminars dealing with the questions, the challenges and implications of present-day "ecumenical" Christendom.<sup>1</sup> Here and there courses and seminars are being offered on "Contemporary Christianity" or "Contemporary Protestantism" which could easily be elaborated into a comprehensive survey, study and understanding of present-day Christendom, a course in Christian Ecumenics.

Dr. Adolf Keller, the "Man of World-Protestantism" who is an outstanding exponent and leader of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Petersmann, "Christian Ecumenics, The Proposal of a Department of Theological Study," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 1932. Also "Œkumenik" in *The Theological Magazine* of the Evangelical Synod and in the *Keryx* of Eden Theological Seminary, 1932. Macfarland, *Christian Unity in Practice and Prophecy*, Macmillan, 1933.

## TRANSLATORS' FOREWORD

this "ecumenical" development of "Kirchenkunde," has already presented, in collaboration with Dr. George Stewart, an admirable picture of *Protestant Europe: Its Crisis and Outlook*, intended especially for Americans, now followed also by this *Kleine Kirchenkunde der Gegenwart*, giving a clear vision and analysis of present-day Christendom as determined by the Barthian challenge. Dr. Keller has given us an inspiration and guide for our proposed department of "Christian Ecumenics."

With ardent hopes for the furtherance of this ecumenical interest, we send our translation on its way.

### THE TRANSLATORS.

Saint Louis  
Baltimore.



## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE following discourse is the outgrowth of a continued personal contact with the church life of both the Old and New Worlds. It is the natural result of many journeys and an extended fellowship of labor covering a period of ten years. Not only was I able to verify the fact that in numerous theological faculties experts are busily occupied with the Barthian theology, but I noticed also, both from the church press and in my personal associations, how the new issues were overflowing from the theological lecture-rooms and pouring forth into the churches themselves.

This newly gained information has, in my opinion, become a valuable contribution to "contemporary Christianity." In this field the problem of Barthianism can be used as a theological sextant with which to determine the position of the individual church constellations in the general religious situation of today. I do not mean to say that this theology furnishes an authoritative basis for final judgments. But its current dissemination throughout almost the entire church world indicates that within this new theology dominant central viewpoints are again emerging,

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

which might well be employed in a general orientation within the present form of Christianity.

There is no dearth of theological treatises upon the new movement. One cannot open any theological journal without meeting it. A whole series of books on the new theology (many merely introductory, and some critical) is available in several languages. Therefore I am concerned not so much about a purely theological presentation or discussion of the new movement, as I am with asking these questions: How does this theology influence the individual churches, how do they react, what part of it do the churches accept and what do they reject, and to what extent is the new theology already working as a ferment in our contemporary religious situation?

These questions are also significant for the future of ecumenical coöperation, since even such efforts can no longer escape facing the issues which Barthianism raises.

The problem can of course not be treated without a theological investigation. Here the following treatise attempts to make a contribution not only to comparative "contemporary Christianity," but also to the discussion of the question: How do theology and church interact?

In the conflict of the church with this theology we are reminded that somehow every theology has developed out of a characteristic church organization attitude, out of a definite tradition and dogmatic position. If this is not observed and understood, and if

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

without regarding this presupposition the various theologies and theological problems are turned loose upon each other, nothing but misunderstanding and mutual reproaches arise.

In my efforts to pursue the trail of the new theology through the church world, my friends in many countries have given me advice, both oral and written, and have often sent me literature as well. I should like to acknowledge my debt to them and to offer them my hearty thanks.

The title of this English translation has been selected upon the advice of friends, who declared that the entire movement of dialectical theology is best known as "Barthianism" on account of its leading exponent, Karl Barth. This is, of course, not entirely consonant with the facts, since the movement is not represented by Karl Barth alone, but quite as much by Emil Brunner and F. Gogarten, and others, some of whom differ vitally in many points from Barth. It is therefore suggested that the reader bear these facts in mind.

It is self-evident, of course, that this treatise can be but a first attempt to trace the influence of a theology which has produced a resonance unusually strong and of international range. My endeavor is but a part of that work of "translation" which is one of the tasks of the present ecumenical movement and, as such I hope it may become a small contribution to a vital comparative study of the churches of today.

A new type of comparative ecclesiology has be-

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

come essential for the exchange of living, spiritual values between Europe and America. It calls for a "translation" of what is best and most profound on both sides, a truly understanding interpretation which is lacking at the present time. International conferences, visits and newspaper articles are not enough. It is necessary to penetrate into the sources in order to find the "common denominator." Thus only can the foundation be laid for that practical coöperation of the American and European churches, which is one of the most important concerns of world Protestantism today.

During the past two years the theological movement has not stood still but has progressed, and it has become clear everywhere that we live in a rapidly changing world.

The Barthian movement itself has progressed meanwhile from its first prophetic message and its criticism of the former theology toward the building up of a dogmatic system. The streams, which sprang forth impetuously from the rock of a soul in revolt, are now quieting down in the large lake of a "Dogmatics" in five volumes which Karl Barth promises us, and of which the first volume has been re-published recently. On the other side, Emil Brunner has filled the lack of an Ethics by the publication of his big volume *Das Gebot und die Ordnungen*.

During this period the whole Barthian movement

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

has undergone such a differentiation between its leaders, Barth, Brunner and Gogarten, that it is no longer quite easy to indicate a common denominator for their various theologies. Even the political changes in Germany have contributed toward this differentiation. Barth himself being a reformed theologian, and a member of the Socialist party, has been driven into stronger opposition toward the present system. Gogarten has found closer contact with the new development of the German revolution. Emil Brunner has discovered a way toward the Oxford Group Movement and has become, so to speak, the theological guardian for these theological "gipsies" as he called the typical workers of this movement.

The influence of the Barthian movement on theological thinking and church life in the various countries has also undergone rapid changes since this book was written. The movement seems to have passed its climax in Germany. England and Scotland are still experiencing its influence, which is perhaps to be found more in its serious religious questions than in its theological answers. In America the new possibilities which the movement is opening for a disorientated generation are just as plainly to be seen as the limitations which it finds in the religious and psychological peculiarities of American thinking.

Relations with the Ecumenical Movement have become hopeful since Karl Barth and some of his followers have agreed to coöperate with the theological

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Commission of the Movement, and since more attention has been paid by the Stockholm Movement to theological problems.

The main positions in the present controversy between Barthianism and the theology of the various churches have remained the same, although the accents which are put on the various problems may have shifted, and the present discussion will doubtless go on for many years. The message of the movement evidently does not consist in a new theological system or in some specific dogmatic formulæ but in a new call from God and His word, demanding that we listen and hear anew, before we try to give an answer by our theological systems.

The translation of this book was first recommended by the Rev. Charles S. Macfarland, General Secretary Emeritus of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, and I wish here to express my thanks for his friendly counsel and help. I am deeply grateful also to the translators for their conscientious work, to Dr. A. J. Macdonald of London, who revised the translation in proof, and to my colleague, Miss Antonia H. Froendt, for her aid in a last revision and in the reading of the proofs.

ADOLF KELLER.

Geneva, Switzerland.

## CONTENTS

	<small>PAGE</small>
<b>INTRODUCTION BY DEAN LUTHER A. WEIGLE</b>	vii
<b>TRANSLATORS' FOREWORD</b>	xi
<b>AUTHOR'S PREFACE</b>	xv
<b>CHAPTER</b>	
I. THE CHURCH TODAY	I
II. BARTHIANISM AS A PHENOMENON OF OUR TIMES	17
III. THE BATTLE FRONTS OF BARTHIANISM	39
The Conflict with the Church	39
The Theological Front	43
The Conflict with Contemporary Science	54
IV. BARTHIANISM ON ITS WAY THROUGH THE CHURCHES	58
German Switzerland	60
Germany	73
Scandinavia	111
Holland	124
France and Latin Protestantism	133
Italy	142
England	144
Scotland	171
America	177
V. THE CONTROVERSY WITH ROMAN CATHOLI- CISM	207
VI. BARTHIANISM AND THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH	225

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
VII. FOREIGN MISSIONS AND BARTHIANISM	239
VIII. SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE CULTURAL LIFE OF TODAY AND SUMMARY	248
IX. THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT AND BARTHIANISM	260
Spirit and Origin of the Ecumenical Move- ment	260
The Problematics of the Ecumenical Move- ment	263
The Ecumenical Movement as a Question Put to the Churches	276
The Discussion with Barthianism	289
ECUMENICAL LITERATURE	317

## **KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY**



## CHAPTER I

### THE CHURCH TODAY

As a result of the current ecumenical movement, the church publicist has acquired a new task. Formerly such inquiry was essentially limited to one's own denomination; it consisted of the presentation of its dogmatical basis, its polity, its traditional practices, and that distinctive spirituality so difficult to comprehend which is called the church and the religious life of a communion.

The ecumenical movement has made it imperative in our day that the churches come to an understanding with and of each other. This closer contact with one another has awakened the desire to understand not only the life of one's own church but also that of other churches. And this desire is not satisfied with a knowledge of their historical setting merely, but seeks to understand their burning issues, their inner tensions, the nature of their conflict with their own past, with their environment, with the state, with present-day culture; and their struggle for new religious and social expression.

During the age of the state or national churches, it was impossible to speak of any profound influence

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

of the churches upon one another. For the most part they were confined within their own national, linguistic, and denominational limits. This was even more true during the last century than at the time of the Reformation. It is precisely at this point that a hasty glance at the relations between the English churches of the Reformation and those of the Continent is very instructive. In the first century of the Reformation, Lutheranism as well as Calvinism exerted a most powerful influence upon the nascent Anglican church, the former in the doctrine of justification, the latter particularly in that of the Lord's Supper. This influence, however, has been so completely forgotten and eliminated, that today Lutheranism has to be rediscovered in England, while in the more recent declarations of the Anglican church the fact that Geneva and Zurich had a protracted influence on the English Reformation, or that Bullinger, for instance, was a sort of oracle for a number of Anglican bishops, appears to be hardly better known. A comparison of the present Lambeth theology with that of the Thirty-nine Articles, in which the effect of the Lutheran doctrine of justification is quite apparent, is especially illuminating. As a matter of fact, this doctrine failed to receive any consideration in the Lambeth Declarations of 1930.

Today the churches are again beginning to influence one another. They are becoming living problems to one another. They are asking one another vital questions. Our modern freedom of movement, the grow-

## THE CHURCH TODAY

ing knowledge of languages, international relations which have become easier and more friendly despite an intensified nationalism, the new interest in other churches awakened by the ecumenical movement—all these impel us increasingly toward new spiritual contacts and discussion on a grand scale. We are no longer concerned, as formerly, merely with the detached study of certain outstanding theological treatises whose ideas flow from one church over into the other, but rather with the mutual elucidation of the actual driving forces within the churches and in their theology. We are seeking the psychological and theological possibilities of transmission and the channels through which the spiritual blessings of others may flow; in other words, a kind of blood transfusion, if one may use this figure. At the same time we are concerned with the defense against foreign spiritual forces which threaten both the specific worth and the historical character of any church.

Thus, for example, in the relatively limited sphere of European Protestantism, the influence of the American "Social Gospel" and of the Anglican conception of the church are making themselves felt far beyond their places of origin. Likewise the questions formulated by Barthianism are no longer bound up with a particular church; they influence quite noticeably the "problematics" of the entire church of to-day. This new inter-reaction has engendered a vitality and a tension which not only characterize the spirituality of the current ecumenical movement,

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

but which are becoming real problems in themselves.

Thus the new tasks of a contemporary description of the churches become visible. No longer dare it be merely church history in the old sense, contenting itself with the presentation of the life and structure of a single church. Nor is it only the study of confessions, symbolism, or present-day church sociology. Rather does it draw into its sphere of interest questions which arise only in the process of mutual understanding and discussion. It may be superlatively simple to comprehend and judge the structure of a strange church in its purely sociological aspect. But that is not enough by far. The churches did not come into the world equipped with a sociological formula but with a spiritual message. And today all of them are facing the common question of how they can understand not only the significance of this message for a new age but also its different operation within the different churches.

The new comparative, ecumenical description of the churches must seek to understand the constitutive principle of a church, its evolution, and its operation, out of the uniqueness of its God-relationship, i.e., out of its special vocation, which, however, in some way concerns the rest of us also. It will often be necessary to translate the principle underlying the work of a given church from the controversial tense into speech common to us all, about the need of God, about a common consciousness of sinfulness, of obedience to

## THE CHURCH TODAY

God's command. However accurately a church may have divined God's word in other ways, we are met in it by a concealed, an "unknown" Christ, one whom we must first learn to know in His particular influence upon a given age and nation. Thus it might readily be that from this distance we gain a better understanding of the church's actual objective than we might have gained while it was engaged in self-defense and conflict and forced to assume its polemical garb. As a matter of fact, in the realm of the Spirit, distance does not render real understanding more difficult. In a certain sense we see America more accurately than America sees itself. Religious America, on the other hand, sees certain aspects and deficiencies of our religious life more clearly than we can see them ourselves.

From this point of view certain questions arise which cannot be dealt with by using a purely scientific, critical apparatus but only with that trusting intuitive, sympathetic interest in each other, and with that sense of obligation toward each other which ecumenical-mindedness implies.

At this point we may also ask how the empirical church conducts itself toward its essential character (*Wesensschau*). Where is its obedience, its temptation, its charisma, its impetus? Wherein lies its fidelity toward that which it has received even while modifying it; wherein lies its infidelity toward its deepest motive even while conserving it? What does it give to other churches? What does it accept from

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

them? Of what freedom is it capable and of what kind? What power of inclusiveness animates it and what power of exclusiveness? How does it make Christ live in its preaching when it carries its message out into the world and therefore also to other churches?

But dare one ask such questions in order thus to feel his way into the secret life of a church? One may do this only when prompted by an ecumenical attitude of mind. If this is done from a nationalistic, denominational, or theologically partisan point of view, the questioning immediately gives rise to a false sense of superiority, to unkindly criticism, to unwarranted didacticism. Only with true *ecumenical-mindedness*, i.e., out of a deep concern for a common cause, out of the consciousness of a common judgment, a common grace, and a sense of common responsibility dare such inquiry be made. Ecumenical-mindedness is therefore no new source of pride for the church but on the contrary a new humility which is fully aware of the fact that we have no occasion whatever to pass judgment, but that, in all churches alike, we find ourselves in a profound community of sin and need of help, out of which we look up together to the light which God gives, whether it appear in our own or in some other church.

Ecumenical-mindedness, therefore, has its origin first of all in a recognition of this solidarity which was neither created nor interrupted in history, but which was posited with our very relation to God. It begins

## THE CHURCH TODAY

with our existence in sin and need, and, in our waiting for God, directs us to the future.

This attitude of mind also makes possible, first, a new sort of self-criticism, which is won from the individuality of others; and second, a new love for our fellow man, because the other church not only circumscribes and threatens, but also enriches us.

It is impossible to present such a study of the church without having entered the warm life-atmosphere of the other church, and then having regained the distance which helps us to observe. How can one learn to know Anglicanism if one has never knelt with Anglicans in their churches and cathedrals, if one has never sung and prayed from their Prayer Book with them, afterwards, indeed, realizing anew what the preaching of the Word signifies? Formerly the knowledge of churches about one another began with a theological concept and not with their life and their fundamental attitude. By that procedure one attains to a theology of differentiating doctrines, but not to an ecumenical knowledge of the churches.

The difficulty in judging reciprocally lies in finding the right point of view. Can the churches be adequately judged from a position outside them or must one—for good or ill—select this viewpoint within some one of the churches?

In the present situation Barthianism offers us a viewpoint which lies outside or beyond that of any one church. Barthianism experiences the selfsame difficulty as the ecumenical movement when it tries

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

to observe man not from this or that psychological or theological angle peculiar to him, but from the viewpoint of God, and again, when as a confessionally determined theology it nevertheless endeavors to be a theocentric theology. Here Barthianism believes it has found a towering viewpoint from which the reality of man and his relation to God can now be essentially discerned and this quite differently than it could be achieved from any historical theology or any empirical church. Thence, it is no longer the "penultimate" questions which will be put to man, i.e., whether he "belongs" to this or that church or what the intellectual formulation of his faith may be, but only the "ultimate" question concerning his "belonging" to God.

From this point of view there is disclosed a new type of question, one which immediately transforms the answer of the other church into a question asked of us and constitutes it our temptation, our problem, our responsibility toward the great common concern before us. This takes place as soon as the churches begin to influence one another, whether through their theology, their social work or their missionary activity.

In this, the "Age of Stockholm," we are beginning to search for possibilities and conditions for mutual understanding and coöperation, as well as ways of re-defining boundaries and of preserving historic characteristics. The last two centuries were hardly aware of this need. The boundaries were fixed. The

## THE CHURCH TODAY

anathema had been pronounced. The *damnamus secus docentes* had terminated all further discussion. This discussion between church and church is being resumed today. But in which language shall it be conducted?

It is here that the problem of translation becomes a really burning question. A purely linguistic translation is obviously not what is needed but an interpretation into another nationality, into its psychology, into the spirit of another church, into a different piety and ecclesiastical type of language. The relation of American Protestantism to European Protestantism is just such an unsolved and perhaps unsolvable problem of translation. Here are required such patience, such charity, such ability to listen to the heart-beat of another church beneath the garment of words, concepts and practices, as are rarely to be found. Impatient international conferences do not usually produce this forbearance and humility. For this we need an effective *Studium*, or in other words *vergleichende Kirchenkunde*, a comparative science of the churches, which does not content itself with theological and ecclesiastical formulæ. It must, rather, be a science which penetrates to the very fountainhead of the religious life where gushes forth that living water which has been received so differently by the churches and which through many conduits and channels issues forth into the world and into Christendom. Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, back at this common source, are closer together than is apparent

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

today to Lutheranism, Zwinglianism, and Calvinism. Who will take American Activism at its best, in all the religious power of its sacrifice and devotion, and translate it for us in terms of the no less vital faith-energy which is stored up in the eschatological expectancy of Continental Lutheranism? Will the sobriety of the Reformed Church, when so confronted, do full justice to the Anglican High Church? How can the Anglican comprehend the Reformed Church's reserve in religious expression?

A comparative ecumenical ecclesiastical science, in raising these questions, which grow out of practical contacts, will not stop at the mere recognition of various types, which are sharply differentiated from one another. It will look for hidden and unknown connections, and for the communion in spirit and love which somehow does exist in spite of the all-too-human element which ever acts divisively.

Ecumenical science of the churches is comparative ecclesiastical science. A comparison can never be made with just the casual interest of an onlooker, and still less with the intention to "hand out grades." It can be effected only as a result of that "existential" responsibility which rests upon the entire church of Jesus Christ and not upon a single denomination only. It is possible only when the churches of today appear not as something "ultimate" but as something "penultimate," and when the possibility of judgment, repentance and conversion is kept sight of as applying not only abstractly or in general but also to any con-

## THE CHURCH TODAY

crete church. If this is done, loyalty toward the church can consist just as much in remaining within it, as in cutting loose from it—i.e., in going forth from a historical church into a superhistorical church of Christ,—a proceeding widely in evidence today both in the layman's criticism of the church and in the general desertion of the church by the masses. Revaluations of church values are now taking place which cannot be grasped by former church standards. It is possible that the big, strong flourishing churches may, in the process of such a revaluation, be "found wanting," while the "churches under the Cross," those negligible "poor relations," may have to be called to the head of the table. There are churches, wonderfully organized, permeated with a holy or unholy missionary zeal and a consciousness of spiritual power that is ready to challenge state and society. These churches are rich in capable preachers and have forces which are well trained and anxious to help. But are they of the world or of the Spirit? I must admit that oftentimes when I sat in magnificent buildings with their stained-glass windows and carved organs, I was less conscious of being in the church of Christ than when, for instance, I was in one of those Ukrainian peasant rooms crowded with men and women who had come barefoot from afar to hear the Word of God. Those poor little congregations and the churches widely scattered in the diaspora, in the hills of Jugoslavia, in the lonely villages of Wolhynia and Poland, in the coal-mining districts

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

of Belgium, in the taverns and barns of Czechoslovakia—those churches truly humble us, because they show us again and again the poverty and the riches of Christ in a way that is impossible in the securely established, self-sufficient and proud church.

If, for the purpose of self-criticism and reflection, we wish to grasp these deeper movements of church life and incorporate them in a study of the churches of today, then the external structure, the organization,—yes, even the confessional accessories—become strikingly insignificant. The big, disconcerting problems do not lie here, but in that “existential”<sup>1</sup> thinking and questioning of those churches which feel themselves divinely summoned to give account of themselves. Today all churches are confronted with the question as to what they have done

<sup>1</sup> The term *existenziell* is a newly coined German term which can hardly be translated. It is applied to a theology that is not merely held by the intellect, but one which deeply concerns the whole life of the person who holds it. Dr. J. McConnachie (*Significance of Karl Barth*, Hodder and Stoughton, p. 75f.) defines “existential” as follows. “The term is derived from *ex-sistere*—stepping forth into activity of this or that moment. . . . We shall best understand it if we begin by asking what is non-existential thinking? The mathematician or the scientist thinks non-existentially. He is a spectator registering facts in a cold, objective, disinterested manner. His work demands no personal decision. So also the philosopher dealing with the totality of things. But when it comes to personal life, in which a man’s very existence is involved, he can no longer be a spectator; he becomes an actor. A question is addressed to him which a man answers as with his life. . . . This is existential thinking. It is thinking grounded in . . . *my* actual concrete situation as a man, in which I am personally involved. When we think religiously, we must think existentially if we would unite truly. And existential acting, acting at the moment of decision to which our existence is mysteriously bound, is linked up with existential thinking.”

## THE CHURCH TODAY

with the talent entrusted to them. The seriousness of this question has become a shibboleth which indicates an ultimate recognition of the church's task and of the fact that it belongs to God's world from which, again and again, it slips back into this world below.

A comparative character-sketch of the contemporary churches cannot be gained from literature or from external contacts as though one were painting a picture. Nor can it be measured by any general idea of the church. The former method of observation would lead into the spheres of statistics and mere sociology. The latter method of measuring, which seeks to judge the churches by some ecclesiastical ideal or normalizing concept—though it were derived from the Scriptures—would fall victim to that constructive idealism so sadly deficient in humility and in a sense of reality. The empirical church is not simply the development of some particular confessional idea. We may rather understand it as the effect of a unique and specific divine Word upon the concrete material of an historical situation, of a particular nation, of a distinctive set of religious "problematics," of a *Kairos*.

Therefore one must also inquire how the empirical church is related to its peculiar mission and to the basic conception from which it emerged. In what sense, for example, does the doctrine of *Sola Fide* still function with power either to create or to condemn a church, and to what extent has a given church remained faithful to its own prin-

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

ciple? How does the *Soli Deo Gloria* (solely for the Glory of God) express itself in the church life of Calvinism and wherein has Calvinism become unfaithful to its nature? In what sense can Anglicanism establish its claim "*to realize a presence*" in ritual and life? And in what sense can it realize the divine both in the form of its worship and in its social behavior? Does Methodism successfully realize its own estimate of conversion and sanctification in its congregational and common life, and succeed in justifying it before the material principle of the Reformation? Is Congregationalism possible in an age of tremendous inter-relatedness and mutual world-wide influences? Can the Inner Light of Quakerism enlighten others today? How does each of these churches defend itself in reference to its own past, and how does it assimilate that past?

When such a question is addressed to every individual church the significant fact is revealed that the entire church no longer represents its nature as originally intended or is no longer able to do so. Every kind of religiosity therefore becomes problematical from the viewpoint of its own essential character. There is none in a position to boast, no, not one. In each one the fall from the heights which it once beheld is all too evident. Every such survey of reality confronts the empirical church with its own guilt, with the fact that it has not been fully loyal to that for which it was called into being and which was its own objective.

## THE CHURCH TODAY

This precludes all mutual judging and condemning, because every single church is asked: "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" Every sort of church pride and ecclesiastical megalomania (or "jumboism" as one would say more pithily in America) is eliminated thereby, and the possibility is created for a mutual appreciation of that particular need wherein each church finds itself. Every confession creates obligation. To recognize this obligation in all its seriousness and human unrealizability is the first step toward understanding the other church which was likewise unable to live up to its own heritage or remain faithful to its confession and the obligation which it voluntarily assumed. With this introspection, this confession of dire need, mutual understanding already begins, because all the churches are in the same extremity. All are addressed by God in the same manner, although in a concrete and therefore different situation. Each church responds to a distinctive aspect of God's Word, with a characteristic recognition—its confession.

To have revived this question, which every church must ask itself, is the merit of Barthianism. True, it has remained a confessional theology, but at the same time it has gone beyond confessional boundaries. Thereby it has become ecumenical, not as the result of conferences and church-union programs but by reason of a most profound and ultimate univer-

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

sal question inherent in it, i.e., by virtue of its "existential" thinking.

It will consequently prove fruitful to take an excursion through the different churches, having in mind this question with which Barthianism is confronting the churches. Let us remember, the question as such is more important than the theological answers called forth by this theology—the jolt administered is far more important than any theoretical formulation.

## CHAPTER II

### BARTHIANISM AS A PHENOMENON OF OUR TIMES

IN the controversy between the empirical churches and dialectic theology, a contemporary phenomenon of current church problematics becomes apparent.<sup>1</sup>

This phenomenon is due not only to the questions peculiar to this theology but also to the older church environment against which it stands out in relief. After all, even this theology did not "fall perpendicularly from heaven." It became possible and necessary in a definite situation, in a specific environment, in the battle against a prevailing conception of the Gospel. It is but a phase of a universal unrest, long in the making, a phase of a new and extensive reflection of the church on her nature and her mission. Barthianism again gives rise to questions asked already by earlier generations, and therefore, in spite of its protest against that earlier environment, finds itself in a far-reaching historical relation in which even predecessors from the Middle Ages come into view.

One is reminded not only of Marcion, but of the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Koepp, *Gegenwärtige Geisteslage und dial. Theologie*, Mohr, 1930.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

“Yes- and No-Theology” of John Scotus Eriugena,<sup>8</sup> and of the dialectical theologians of scholasticism or of Lagrange, the French-Catholic theologian of the seventeenth century (cf. Henri Bremond’s great work), of Pascal and of Augustine.<sup>9</sup> We are further reminded of Kohlbruegge, who distinctly bears the imprint of the Reformation. The writer made the acquaintance of the last-named when he heard his theology preached by a country pastor in the remote seclusion of a little Wisconsin village. The resemblance to Karl Barth was such a surprise that he thought at first it was copied. Even before the rise of Barthianism one could detect in the theology of the last few decades the germs of the New struggling up to the light. One could see them in the critique of contemporary historicism and psychologism as insisted upon by Wobbermin, as well as in the positive statements of a theocentric theology as found in Schaeder, and earlier in Kaehler and Schlatte as well as in Heim and even in Herrmann. However, our concern here is not with these forerunners, but rather with the *intellectual environment* into which the theology of crisis crashed and apart from which it can hardly be conceived, either in its critical or its positive aspects. The form of this theology resulting from the clash with its environment is so completely a picture of our Continental,

<sup>8</sup> Cf. W. Betzendoerfer, *Glauben und Wissen bei den grossen Denkern des Mittelalters*, Gotha, 1931.

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Rade also in his *Glaubenslehre* calls attention to this line and traces it back to Pseudo-Dionysius.

## BARTHIANISM AS A PHENOMENON

and, in particular, our German and Swiss situation, that the Western world, especially, finds it hard to see the distinctiveness of this theology. It is therefore no foreign element, no speculative find, no vision strange to the world. In spite of its transcendental message it is at the same time a picture of our times which has proceeded out of the current thesis and antithesis, and to that extent is characteristic of the present situation.

This fact is indicated also by the various names of the "new" theology. It is called a post-war theology or even an "inflation" theology, a theology of pessimism or despair, but is preëminently designated a "theology of crisis." This does not mean that it is to be understood solely as the product of a mood of the day or exclusively as opposition to it. It is and will remain a theology in its own right. But, at the same time, it is an expression of our day, a form expressing our particular spiritual need, the need of God and the religious need of the present. To understand its special message one must see its background. The Englishman and the American find it difficult to comprehend because they do not as yet perceive its function within the larger whole. Hence "it only thunders above our heads," as Morgan once said. The dark cloud of this theology passes over their churches and discharges brilliant flashes of lightning. The storm rages portentously above them, but no one knows whence it cometh nor whither it goeth.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

It therefore becomes essential for an understanding of this theology and its effect that we begin with its natural setting and from its thesis see the antithesis which it breaks away from in order to become a movement. It is partly characterized by that very theological ecclesiastical world of today against which it rebels. In this respect also it is "dialectical" theology, that its depositions are made not with cold, scientific calm, unconcerned about their effect, but rather in vehement discussion with modern man, in a real disputation; an antithesis, not only to culture but also to theology and church as we know them. It is a "combatant theology." It "shoots to kill"!

These very antitheses therefore give sharp, occasionally too sharp emphasis to the following basic tenets of current Christianity:

1. In the absolutism of this theology there is to be seen first of all a necessary reaction against the *relativism* of the entire modern attitude of mind. This relativism appears in the garb of the idealism, humanism, individualism, subjectivism, and criticism which have to a large extent controlled theological thinking also. Wherever relativism reduced human pretensions it was in the right. But it has also made relative the divine to the point where God was reduced to a mere idea of God and where the divine was sought simply in a part of human consciousness.

This is the one form of idealism in our contemporary theology which Barthianism attacks. Throughout its theological presentation it is con-

## BARTHIANISM AS A PHENOMENON

cerned with God Himself, not simply with the presentation of God-consciousness. Barthianism attacks this logical and epistemological idealism because there is danger of mistaking the object with which theology ought to deal. There is danger of a diminution of its actual substance. But this opposition is based not only upon epistemological grounds, but upon religious ones as well.

Dialectic theology, therefore, opposes also that dynamic idealism which fixes its own object and thereby presumes to create an object, a thing which it has no power to do. Not only is the God-idea, as such, a diminution and emptying of the living reality which is meant, but the dynamic act of fixation itself is an abrogation of that religious relation in which man is set and not God. An exchange of subject and object is taking place in the religious affirmation. The subject becomes the object and the object becomes the positing and therefore sovereign subject.

Barthianism does not even allow ethical idealism to go unchallenged. For the latter subordinates action to a moral idea which arose within the province of human reason. Thereby moral behavior loses the character of personal responsibility and obedience, and thus becomes the very representation of the validity of reason. For an ethical idealism even the religious relationship is orientated in human conduct—referring, of course, not to the empirical individual—and not in the action of God. The autonomy of reason is identified with God Himself, the Law-

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

giver with His law. The *idea* of the Absolute, however, is not the Absolute, and the Absolute is not God but a man-made abstraction. Herein Barthianism sees the last vestiges of Hellenic thinking, and at this point turns vigorously to the biblical conception of God found in the Old Testament, which is voluntaristic and personalistic.

In the battle against idealism, Barthianism does not attack either this or that idealistic system, or the religious *a priori*, or any religion whatever within the limits of pure reason, but does attack the very nature of this static and monistic thinking, with its desire for system, unity, logical order, for the intellectual supremacy of man, which permeates the whole philosophy of modern science. Modern theology, clearly involved, became aligned with this thinking when it attempted the impossible; namely, to make a place for God in this unified system of the human mind, or at least when it tried to stake off the area where He might find a place.

Barthianism attacks this same relativism as it occurs in the *theology of experience*, which is even more characteristic of the prevailing situation than idealism. All experience is in itself relative. Wher- ever experience is taken as the starting-point, the religious relationship from the very first is based upon something human and relative which cannot possibly represent the Absolute. If the substance of experience or its *a priori* forms is taken as a norm, it is difficult to see whence it is to receive any

## BARTHIANISM AS A PHENOMENON

religious authority if there has been no previous understanding of the relation obtaining between revelation and experience. To be sure, Barthianism no longer denies that we cannot do without religious experience. But it considers this experience secondary and dependent upon conditions which themselves are not to be found in experience.

This relativism in the theology of consciousness and experience in its idealism, subjectivism and humanism, is the background against which Barthianism stands out, but at the same time it is none the less a factor in the empirical form of Barthianism.

A large part of this theological idealism and experiential theology really does not receive its just due in this criticism. There are two things which Barthianism does not sufficiently recognize. In the first place it does not appear to understand that the entire theology of consciousness and experience should be considered from a definite viewpoint, i.e., its desire to interpret divine reality to the human intellect and therefore to interpret it also to science. It does not claim to be theology as such, but a theology for man, for his experiential possibilities as well as for his belief in the unity of the human mind. This is an after-effect of Kant's transcendental apperception. Theology is always *theologia ad hominem*. Besides which, it always had an apologetical purpose and served not so much to present its own object as to meet the claims of the unified, scientific consciousness of mankind. Schleiermacher, Herrmann, and

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

Troeltsch, therefore, knew full well that the fundamental religious assumption from which they proceeded was not identical with God. Being religious thinkers they knew that "incoördinable" of which Gourd speaks in his *Trois dialectiques*. The religious consciousness is no more identical with the divine for Schleiermacher than the experience of Christ's influence upon the distressed conscience for Herrmann or the religious a priori for Troeltsch. These are not their ultimate religious realities in their actual God-relationship, but only scientific metaphors, figures of speech made necessary in order to speak of the religious in the scientific language of their day. Herein can be seen the pedagogical purpose of their theology which of course can be understood either correctly or incorrectly.

2. Another feature of Barthianism,—incidentally characterizing by antithesis the previous generation,—is its profound and fundamental *pessimism*. This can be accounted for only as the positive rejection of that theological and ecclesiastical *optimism* which prevailed throughout the church life of that generation and found significant expression in the *Kultur-protestantismus*. The new pessimism rejects the self-confidence of scientific theology even as it rejects the self-assurance and certainty of salvation characterizing the church of the last century.

Theological science with its scientific certitude was very largely influenced by the methods of the critical and constructive scientific system which the natural

## BARTHIANISM AS A PHENOMENON

and mental sciences had erected during the last century. The empirical and the rationalistic-synthetical methods scarcely differ from each other in this respect, for both are dependent upon something final, something directly given, whether it be the first fact of self-consciousness, as in the fundamental thesis of Descartes, or that of the self-evident experience.

The success of this method in the elucidation of historical and psychological facts is indisputable. Much of it can never be lost. But Barthianism now calls attention to an overstepping of boundaries and raises the question concerning the nature of the given fact with which theological work is occupied. At one time, history appeared as such a given fact. All that was necessary was to treat it critically, to establish a reasonable sequence, to arrange its elements synthetically and constructively in order to gain an approximately correct picture of history, in order to know "how it actually was." The certainty of the historical construction accordingly was based upon the very nature of that given fact and upon the method of its treatment. From this position the problem of faith and history was constantly affected. The certainty attaching to the historical heritage and to the content of faith complemented each other. It does not matter if the naïve certainty of an uncritical disposition had to be shattered at many a point. It was replaced by the certainty of the method. Historical problems actually appeared solved because they appeared only as *historical* problems and the critical

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

method had established the historically *given* in a reasonable context. That which is given really presents itself to us as a task, but it is merely the task of seeking historical knowledge which is here assumed. In confining itself to the gaining of this historical knowledge, historical theology has experienced real triumphs, especially in European theology. The divine appeared as given in definite historical contents, given so that man was able to lay hold of it.

For American theology it is rather that which is *psychologically* given which the scientific method seizes upon. Thereby theology very largely became a psychology of religion. The human soul in the past and present was considered as something given, both in respect to its possible contents and its ways of functioning. These data were first isolated from their metaphysical context in order to be put into a tabulated plan of natural science. In doing this it was forgotten that that first context in which the psychic data were discovered was the first "given fact," and that every new context into which the soul is put no longer corresponds to the first.

Such a positivism growing out of the psychology of religion leads to that blissfully confident optimism which today governs religious pedagogy in America. This science believes it has discovered in its fixed data of the psychology of religion, and in a reliable experimental method, the way to verified religious knowledge and the way to a reliable theory and technique of religious education.

## BARTHIANISM AS A PHENOMENON

Over against this religio-historical and religio-psychological optimism Barthianism holds up an annihilating pessimism with respect to our knowledge. The divine is not given, either in history or in psychology. There is no divine *datum* which man and his science might master. In no way whatever is the divine an object, either as an historical fact or as a psychic condition. "The Eternal Light" does not enter either into historical or psychological science and the bright gleam they claim to possess is a will-o'-the-wisp.

In the historical critique of Bultmann we see the self-dissolution of an historical theology which, by using critical methods, thought it could ascertain proved, objective, religious facts. There is nothing left and the scientific certainty suddenly becomes a scepticism which is no longer able to reckon with anything historically given. On the other hand, Karl Barth shows that history, so far from "saving" us, is exceedingly "questionable." Whatever appertains to history is of the world and therefore is bound up in its processes. This historical pessimism is extended to cover biblical history as well. Inasmuch as this is also history, it is unreliable and doubtful.

Running parallel to this intellectual pessimism is an ethical pessimism, which by its very contrast shows up and rejects that easy ethical optimism of a by-gone day, which was so confident and happy in its cultural attainments. The past generation bore the stamp and character of the bourgeoisie, i.e., man felt him-

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

self comfortably established, his life was based upon a firm foundation, economically and politically solid and secured by reliable moral principles. This bourgeois character and its piety is strongly orientated ethically and hence is determined by man's conduct. Man knows what is good and righteous and can achieve it by his own unaided efforts. For that the law was given him. Imperceptibly running parallel to this bourgeois-moralizing of Christianity we find, within the church, a tendency to Pelagianism and Synergism. We find it clearly expressed in the simple piety of the European peasant, but also in what is regarded as the titanic American "activism" that wants to "evangelize the world in this generation," that does violence to the Kingdom of God and endeavors to compel it by the most vigorous moral and religious efforts.

Such optimistic notes were heard clearly enough at the opening of the World Conference of Churches at Stockholm, coming particularly from the American and English side. Wherever practical reason, wherever the ethos, with or without the Gospel, seeks to create the relationship to God, there man easily raises himself to a high-spirited ethical position of security which is not in keeping with that relationship. This sense of security is rooted in the consciousness that there is accord between the human and the divine will, if not in every single act, at least in the basic ethical attitude and aim. The Catholic Church can justly point out that in this ethical optimism, in

## BARTHIANISM AS A PHENOMENON

this "Social Gospel" and its emphasis upon the ethical act, something has again crept into the church of the *sola gratia*, which the latter really ought to reject as a leaven of the Roman Catholic "justification by works."

The religious parallel to this ethical optimism is the certainty of possessing salvation. If it is ethical certainty that characterizes American activism then joy based on the certainty of salvation is a characteristic of Lutheranism. Where all other certainties have collapsed this certainty of salvation has remained. It belonged to the actual theological heritage of the Lutheran Church, even though in the course of its life as a church, Lutheranism did not always remain mindful of the dark and terrible background which produced this certainty—the background of sin's black despair and of an anguished conscience.

This ethical and religious optimism which bestows something happy, something sure, and something indisputable, serves effectually as a background for that theology of despair, of divine wrath, of distress and of the cross, such as we may well designate the new theology at this point. If, on the one hand, the church up to now has let its ethos and its certainty of salvation sparkle in the sun like jewels, it is true also, on the other hand, that this new theology conceals everything which might look like moral certainty and concrete religious possession. The good is, in fact, concealed as much as salvation. Certainty is the last thing a sinful individual can have. For out of

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

himself he knows neither God nor righteousness nor salvation. At any rate he must first doubt and despair before he even approaches them. And then he always approaches like the publican, empty-handed, who trembling keeps his distance, and not like the Pharisee who is so sure of his ethics and his religion. The nature of man is best understood when it is viewed problematically. The writers, Dostoevski and Kierkegaard, demon-ridden and practically insane, have depicted it more truly than did the healthy-minded Jeremiah Gotthelf and the writers of the Victorian Age or the radiantly happy Emerson and the happy worldling Whitman.

Man, even the Christian, has no ethical foundation beneath his feet. He is suspended over seven thousand fathoms' depth. Nor has he any religious possession upon which he may depend in the hour of distress. In truth, he possesses nothing, for to possess means to rule. Possession implies sovereignty. A religious possession therefore appears as a contradiction in itself. Thus the empirical human being, in his relation to God, can be nothing but the pauper, the lifeless clay that has nothing and must receive life and possessions as a gift.

In these contrasts one sees sketched the outlines of the *terra firma* of current theology and church life. From this "solid" shoreline the frail and leaky little boat of the new theology (for such it claims to be) pushes off to fare forth on a dangerous and unknown sea, where it meets the One who alone can

## BARTHIANISM AS A PHENOMENON

give confidence and security—God. But this certainty is always but momentary, ever to be received anew by an act of God; it is not an asset in which we can rejoice.

The purpose of this contraposition is merely to characterize the form of the new theology by its environment and to locate the painful point of contact, where the new hurts the old, where the decisive intellectual controversy begins in the present consciousness. That is possible only when a certain mutual interpenetration has already taken place. So far as the writer sees, this controversy takes its course through the different churches in *three* stages.

In the first stage the sole effort is made to understand the new theology as objectively as possible, and to present it without any personal addition. This is usually impossible, for such personal addition is necessarily involved in the very question and forms of judgment with which it is conceived. The new theology, furthermore, does not tolerate such objectivity and demands the self-same “existential” concern about itself as is accorded the questions of life and death. It does not expect recognition but decision, not neutrality but hatred or love.

The second stage of the controversy begins with either criticism or praise, mostly with criticism. Criticism means security, or the attempt to safeguard one's own security. A certain type of criticism, recognizable by its vehemence or its fanaticism, can, however, according to psychology's law of compensation,

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

just as truly betray an inward insecurity. Barthianism has provoked veritable explosions of such criticism. As a rule, this criticism has failed to step out of its own orbit, and therefore has not even acquainted itself with the unfamiliar elements in the new theology. Even the kindly bestowed praise, the carefully weighed assent, does not yet belong to that "existential" discussion which becomes a matter of life or death. Praise itself need not even originate in genuine love, nor in understanding and acceptance; it is often a patronizing gesture made from the height of assured possession. *Qui te laudat judex tuus esse memento.*

Not until the third stage is reached does that real inner controversy begin, which results from full knowledge, from a reciprocal patient willingness to learn—not out of a sense of intellectual adequacy equal to face this challenge but out of a capacity for self-effacement. It results from that love which alone makes for fellowship even in criticism, from the humility of the novice for whom conversion is a permanent form of life, but also from the freedom peculiar to the Christian who never bends, not even before a new theology, but before God alone.

These three stages in the discussion with Barthianism naturally are not distributed according to countries and denominations. In all of them one can find representatives of all three stages. But in so far as the concern is not only with the controversies of individuals

## BARTHIANISM AS A PHENOMENON

with this theology, but with the contact of whole churches with these questions, i.e., since this is an interchurch and international disputation—the different churches, apart from individual exceptions, make their appearance in different stages of this discussion.

The American church world is just beginning to take cognizance of it and has scarcely begun to understand and present it. It finds especial difficulty in understanding a presentation without its corresponding environment. Hence this volume attempts to present the new theology, not so much in its systematic structure as in its general outlines, which delineate not only the theology itself but also its background.

For the most part the Continental and British churches are in the second stage. Here praise and censure are equally distributed and criticism is used just as zealously as a means of understanding as in self-defense. In this stage we find not only the critics who hand out the bad marks from the secure haven of their theological chairs, but we find those young enthusiasts as well, who hang on to the bell-rope and impetuously clang the bell, which almost unintentionally sounded that first note when Karl Barth mounted the belfry and in the darkness accidentally caught hold of the rope. It must be said that Karl Barth is honestly desirous of shaking off these too zealous imitators and of throwing them down the very stairs up which they, all too readily,

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

have followed him. Repeatedly, and in different churches, they have already had to hear his angry *quos ego*.

Individual groups from different churches, particularly some of the younger men, for whom the "Theology of Crisis" has become a personal crisis, have now entered upon the last stage. They have surrendered the spectator's point of view as well as that of fruitless criticism or of an equally fruitless praise. They are handing out no more marks, either good or bad, because they themselves are taking the examination. They no longer wish merely to understand or to judge but they wish to ask along with others who are asking and are being asked. For them the vehemence, the arrogance, the intellectual paradoxes, the purely theological quality of the new theology, belong to those human limitations which we need not take too seriously, because they constitute only shell and container for something wholly different. This "wholly different" demands no judgment upon this theology, so far as one may quietly pursue the necessary business of criticism; it does demand self-examination, an appraisal of our own theology, our own church life and piety. For this, such seriousness is essential as is hardly ever achieved in the sphere of pure intellect and which we find only when we penetrate to the very roots of our spiritual existence.

Such groups of vital discussion are found today in Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Den-

## BARTHIANISM AS A PHENOMENON

mark. When we listen in to these countries—their sermons, their religious press, the discussions of their synods and ministerial gatherings—we hear not only many a familiar word from the vocabulary of this theology (there is a dialectical jargon!) but often simply the earnestness, the deep stirrings of the soul, the “existential” question, the distress and the expectancy, as signs that something new has been heard and understood.

And this, no doubt, is far more important to Barthianism than the mere theological comprehension and acceptance of its tenets. In Germany, Switzerland and in the Netherlands the self-complacent and successful church has in recent days, in spite of joy in its own activity and in spite of the proclaimed “century of the church,” lost its power of speech and needs protective stipulations to prevent the watchful and snapping *domini canes* from disturbing its naïve happiness. The largest Protestant synod on the Continent did not consider it beneath its dignity to pick up somewhat gingerly, it is true, the theological gauntlet which Karl Barth flung down before it. Occasionally one may experience the miracle of a resumption of active interest in theology on the part of congregations, because they have grown tired of their ethical, psychological and devotional preoccupations. Several presentations of the new theology, especially arranged for congregations, have appeared (Strauch, Burckhardt, Kolfhaus) and the religious press is briskly continuing

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

this process of popularization and of integration in the church. Unquestionably there has been created a new theological and ecclesiastical atmosphere, in which everything appears more sharply defined and therefore more tragic.

Barthianism is as yet no theological system, even though the usual volumes on dogmatics are even now being published. It is still in the form of a struggle in which the old and the new are fighting for survival, and of a condition of distress in which there is a battle with invisible powers. But it is precisely as a theology of crisis that it embodies our religious quest of today, and our modern religious problematics. The new theology has torn a vast gap between the relativism, which human thinking projects into everything, and the absolutism of a theocentric theology; it has created an antithesis between the prevalent optimism of a happy certitude and a deep distress of faith. In both this gap and antithesis, the essential tension of our present religious situation is provisionally recognized.

The battleground between the new theology and the church lies in the theological faculties, in the circles of younger pastors, and in the church press; yet we are beginning to find it in the synods also. The church does not oppose the demand for self-examination and repentance, but feels that a large proportion of the dialectic reproaches are uncomprehending and unjust. It refers to the concrete reality within which it stands and from which it must necessarily take its

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

tasks just because of that faithful obedience to which it owes its understanding of the Word.

In this battle we behold a gigantic spiritual struggle between prophetism and institutionalism, between Spirit and organization, between a pneumatological and a sociological conception of the church's mission, between a church which does not want to be of the world, and a church which feels itself divinely called and, just because of the Revelation and the Incarnation, feels itself obliged to speak, to serve and to fight in this very world. Finally it is a battle between a church of the "Word" and a church of "action," between a patriotic church and the church of Jesus Christ.

Since the situation is different in every country we must defer further discussion until we come to deal with the individual countries and churches. But this attack upon the church is radically different from any other. For the first time the church has been called into question not from without, not by atheism, socialism, science, not by any bourgeois indifference, but rather, it has been questioned from within, from out of its own midst, out of its very nature—a situation which reminds us of the opposition of Israel's Prophetism within the religious Communion of the Old Testament.

Barthianism is, therefore, a picture of our religious situation inasmuch as it portrays the dissatisfaction of the church with itself, the self-contradiction which results as soon as it orientates itself by its God-given

## **KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY**

commission and not by its cultural requirements. This dissatisfaction, this self-contradiction constitutes a crisis such as every prophetic message brings with it for all theology and church life.

## CHAPTER III

### THE BATTLE FRONTS OF BARTHIANISM

WHEN we proceed from the antitheses outlined above, which determine the tense relation of the new theology to the present situation, and take up the fundamental questions involved, we discover three battlefields on which the conflict with the church, with existing theology and science is being fought. What we are looking for here is a preliminary survey of the problematics of the movement, its principal questions and the place of their treatment as well as the meaning of the controversy. The next chapter will present the concrete instances, the individual problems and the effect of the problematics of the movement in the individual countries and churches.

#### THE CONFLICT WITH THE CHURCH

Barthianism is an ecclesiastical theology which is interested in the “apostolic succession” of the confession and of the Gospel message, and which desires to maintain the church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets. To be sure, a host of specifically theological questions are involved which can only be handled in theological disputation between individuals. This critical discussion is in full swing between the commentators and systematists on both

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

sides. The theological critique pursues its course and does its work sternly. Siegfried,<sup>1</sup> for instance, applies a stethoscope, as it were, to the whole theology and uncovers its weak points in detail. He finds logical contradictions, intolerable consequences, gaps, unproven statements, and occasional oversights. He offers innumerable criticisms which cannot be summarily waved aside with a grand gesture by the Barthian theology. Many of these criticisms must be answered if the impression is to be avoided that Barthianism, by a bold use of general fundamental ideas, disregards scientific exactness, painstaking detail work and sound logic.

In spite of this necessary and purely theological critique, the debating platform in this case lies not primarily in the field of theology, the lecture-room, or the theological journal, but in the *church*. Barthianism began with a church problem. Karl Barth realized the distressing anxiety of the preacher who, in the present chaotic times, felt that he must bring his congregation a message coming from God. Out of the extremity of the present-day preacher this theological discovery was born. It was practical theology until it found a theoretical and purely scientific substructure; then it penetrated the technical theological problems. Accordingly, the new theology did not grow out of specific theological theses; it grew out of the urgency of the church, out of the anxious concern for the church, out of the inquiry as

<sup>1</sup> Siegfried, *Das Wort und die Existenz*, Klotz, Gotha.

## THE BATTLE FRONTS OF BARTHIANISM

to the content and purpose of the church's message. Barthianism was itself vitally implicated in the mission of the church, in a way that could never have been possible for a purely scientific theology, or indeed, a "secular" theology.

And so a discussion of basic principles has set in between theology and the church, more thorough-going than any we have seen since the Reformation. The place which this problem assumes in the midst of the different theological schools is significant. For nineteenth century theology it lay for the most part far out along the edge of actual theological work. It was even possible completely to separate scientific theology from ecclesiastical theology, as Overbeck and Bernoulli did. And this was possible not only in Germany, where the theological faculty of a university is government-appointed, but also in the Netherlands, where the teaching corps consists of both government and church professors. The demand of the "Free Church"—or free church faculty—has therefore arisen in both countries as a protest against an intolerable secularity of theology, and the demand is being fulfilled in Germany as well as in the Netherlands and in Norway.

This strained relation between theology and church could not arise in America, where most theological schools are institutions of the church. For this reason theology in America has sometimes become dependent less upon the church proper, and more upon denominational interests, contemporary cultural tend-

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

encies, and in certain cases even upon individuals, a situation foreign to our European faculties.

In this dispute the American churches remind theology of its task, while in Europe, conversely, Barthian theology assumes the rôle of the warning voice. There is surely something abnormal in this inversion of tasks. Such action on the part of Barthian theology occurring in a critical situation becomes tolerable only because this group fortunately has not as yet resorted to any party influence in order to secure for itself the necessary political pressure upon the church, but rather has contented itself with prophetic admonitions, coming from no party interest but from a deep concern for the entire church.

The critique which this theology exercises upon the church demands that it reflect upon its nature and therefore above all reduce its activities. The reminder is: "Church, go back to your fundamentals!" The essential task of the church is preaching the Word. This and nothing else. This demand effects a sort of cleansing of the temple. The world has no place in the church. The worldly character attaching to much of church benevolence, missions, social work, church art, church politics, organization and also to church enthusiasm is placed under a searching light. Once more the church is isolated from the world as a matter of fundamental principle. "The Christian is not found in society." Consequently the cultural function of the church, according to Overbeck, is rejected, or at least seriously questioned as being seculariza-

## THE BATTLE FRONTS OF BARTHIANISM

tion. The church must not permit the world, but only the Word of God, to define its mission. Everywhere it meets with endless criticism.

Its history, its effect, its usefulness, its inactivity and its urge to activity, its ignorance of the world and its worldliness, its dogmatics and its ethics—all these are criticized. The world again recalls its ancient enmity toward the church. In Barthian theology the church questions itself from within, out of its very nature, and it exercises a ruthless self-criticism. This critique does not measure the church by any idealistic standard nor by any required achievement, but by the divine commission which is its very constitution. The question no longer is: What does the world, culture, the state, or society say to the church? It is rather this: What does Jesus Christ say to His church? Thus the church from within its own midst is again confronted with the fundamental question of the Reformation. Here a conflict breaks out, not only between theology and the church but between two different conceptions of the church, which in the next chapter we shall learn to know in concrete form.

### THE THEOLOGICAL FRONT

Adjoining the first battle front, that of the clash between theology and church, is another,—the clash between Barthian theology and contemporary theology. In the first chapter we have already referred to the spiritual background against which the new theology stands out. Here we go a step farther by

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

referring to the main theological problems around which the conflict centers.

(a) First among these is the *Problem of God*, from which all other problems arise.

The new theology, being theocentric, opposes every form of anthropocentric theology. Not only is the primacy of the divine will proclaimed, but also the primacy of the divine thinking or rather a demand for thinking from the viewpoint of God.

The existing Continental theology, as a matter of principle, held firmly to both transcendence and immanence and, no doubt, found that both were scripturally confirmed and dogmatically necessary. Positive theology emphasized the transcendental without denying the immanent, while liberal theology placed a stronger accent upon God's immanence in the world and man, without, to be sure, affirming transcendence in like manner, although the transcendence and "otherness" of God were by no means denied. Barthian theology quite consciously puts the accent exclusively upon *transcendence*<sup>\*</sup> and emphatically denies the immanence found in a "theology of consciousness," in a theology of experience, in mysticism and in pantheism. God is in heaven and man is on earth. He is the completely distant, the hidden, the unapproachable. He is not the World-Soul, the Absolute Spirit, the First Cause, the Moral-Law, the *natura*

<sup>\*</sup> But Barth has now modified his emphasis on *transcendence*, and allows adequately for divine immanence, especially through the agency of the Holy Spirit. (Translators' note.)

## THE BATTLE FRONTS OF BARTHIANISM

*naturans*—he is the *Totally Other*. From this position the doctrine of immanence is attacked as the surreptitious acquirement of knowledge of God, as the confusion of man's highest aspiration with the divine itself, as an improper assumption of intimacy between man and his Creator and Judge, as self-deception on the part of the pious man who believes he can find the highest in his own inner being and really finds but a “carbon copy” of his own life. Not only is man entirely without the capacity to attain the divine through any exertion whatever, but the finite according to its very nature is not at all capable of receiving the infinite. *Finitum non capax infiniti*.

At this point we find the Reformed doctrine of the Sovereignty of God, the Reformed denial of all deification of the creature which is opposed to a certain Lutheran familiarity with God and surety of possessing salvation, opposed to the Anglican interpretation of the doctrine of Incarnation as well as to all mysticism which seeks to lay hold on God in one's inner life or even goes so far as to seek to enjoy Him.

With this emphasis upon the unknown, hidden, remote God, the theology hitherto prevailing feels reminded of Marcion and counters with the question: What significance has an entirely hidden, unapproachable God for man? How can He be understood, laid hold of, how can He become a part of our life?

Barthian theology does not reply to this with epistemology or psychology of religion but with its doc-

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

trine of Revelation and the Word of God. God is simply not meant to be understood, grasped and incorporated, not even in the most sensitively spiritual manner. That is *hybris* and religious covetousness. He should be heard rather than possessed. He reveals Himself through His Word, not otherwise. His revelation remains Word and does not become the pious man's intimate God-contact, mystical enjoyment, moral experience and intellectual knowledge. God's revelation in His Word remains purely a revelation, an address, a summoning.

The discussion between the old and new theology at this point naturally leads on to the question as to what we are to understand by God's Word. The Scriptures are not readily identified with God's Word, since as a historical fact they have been handed over to criticism, and Christ in so far as He participates in history also shares in the questionableness of all things historical.

On the Barthian side this counter-question leads on to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and its inner testimony. Only the written word plus the Spirit give us God's Word. The written word without the Spirit is but the letter. The Spirit without the written word leads to mysticism or to rationalism. In the new theology's doctrine of the Spirit the dialectical character of Barthianism again reveals itself. The dangerous staticism of the objective attitude to the scriptural text is broken up and made to live by the dynamics of the Spirit. But the equally dangerous

## THE BATTLE FRONTS OF BARTHIANISM

dynamics of the Spirit requires the staticism of the written, immovable Word.

Here the objection is made that the *testimonium spiritus sancti*, which in the act of faith stirs within the soul, must somehow be recognized as such and distinguished from other stirrings of the soul. In other words, the problem of experience arises when the question is put regarding the working of the Spirit.

Barthian theology is here endeavoring to keep the divine action safely removed from every human claim, every control over the Spirit, every too intimate connection between the human and the divine, and this out of constant fear of mixing or confusing the two. A new pathos of remoteness is required which will banish all impudent intimacy, every all-too-sure certainty of faith, all sweet communion from the presence of God, who, as man's Lord, Judge and Redeemer, addresses him from the solitude of His high place.

(b) With this question regarding the working of the Spirit in man we have already shifted the theological scene of battle from the discussion of the problem of God to that of a further problem of prime importance, namely the relation of man to God. This is characterized as an "existential encounter." Here lies the real earnestness of this theology. Here are its ethics. Here is its experience. An "existential" God-relationship means nothing other than that an actual meeting with God is required at the very heart

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

of existence. Barthianism denies that such a meeting takes place in the disinterested scientific approach to the problem of God. In the latter the subject-object relationship of the God-relation is exactly inverted. God has become the object for man. In this approach of the onlooker the "I" does not deal with the reality of God in its sensitive and "existential" center of life, but in an intellectual sphere where the terrible opposition of another Subject, a real, commanding "Thou," or of a real Power in the second person is calmed down to the pleasing clarification of an idea, one idea placed alongside others without disturbing any of them. Or perhaps this supposed "encounter" with God may occur in the ethical sphere, where the dangerous light of God's presence is toned down by the light of one's own good deeds, by the light of an obedience ever so faithfully expressed by mind, by hand and mouth, but the "meeting" does not occur in that "existential" depth of the soul where the question is one of life or death. Here our very existence is called into question by God, allowing us no opportunity to escape to some intellectual, ethical or religious hiding-place. Only in these depths does that come to pass of which Vinet says: *Ce qu'il y a de terrible lorsqu'on cherche la vérité c'est qu'on la trouve.* Neither by the intellectual idea of God, nor by ethical conduct, nor by the *unio mystica* is man taken entirely off his hinges. He can still assert himself over against God as a reverent thinker, or as a doer of the divine will, or as vaguely feeling himself

## THE BATTLE FRONTS OF BARTHIANISM

in the divine presence. Reverent thinking, ethics, worshipful emotion are still the bush behind which the old Adam is hiding himself. In an “existential” meeting God commands him to step forward with the awful question: “Adam, where art thou?” and brings him inexorably into His challenging presence.

The meeting occurs at that point where man, in this divine presence, feels he ought to be existing because God has created him and yet he feels that in reality he does not exist at all as a creature of God but that, on the contrary, he thinks his own being, observes or breaks commandments, and enjoys himself and God. Religion and ethics thus appear plainly as a flight from the meeting with the real and living God.

We have said that in this encounter the ethics of the Barthian theology is to be found, because here in the ethical opposition to the divine law, man becomes conscious of his responsibility for the whole of his existence, and because here the first ethical stirring is noted, namely the desire for truthfulness regarding one’s existence. The judgment spoken by this truthfulness is annihilating for man. Here actual experience arises as a matter of fact, an experience of sin’s distress, of one’s own questionableness, of the dying personality—death itself becomes experience. The life which comes from God, on the other hand, is only faith, which is by no means identical with experience. The religious experience is thus indicated

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

as a negative quantity. But it is entirely real, not acted, not thought, not dreamed, not enjoyed, but is actually *lived*—the death of the “ego” before the face of God, who is a consuming fire.

At this point the discussion of fundamental principles is particularly fruitful. The transposition of man’s encounter with God from the various forms and functions of existence back into existence itself, proves to be that great attainment which distinguishes religion from the actual God-relation. In religion, Barthianism still sees man in his own human sphere, be it ever so sublime. Religion constitutes man’s highest form of life. In the “existential” meeting with God, man for the first time is expected to leap, as it were, out of his existence and thereby into the hands of the terrible living God Himself. No one can do that. Therefore the need of God (“Gottesnot”) is the greatest distress in which the existence of man finds its end.

The theology hitherto prevailing, the positive as well as the liberal, just at this point evidences a real appreciation of this conception. But it likes to remind Barthianism that it was not this new theology which first discovered the gravity of the God-relationship, and that, indeed, in the past it had occurred to but few to consider perchance either theological thinking or pious æsthetics as being an actual “existential” meeting with God. The case is different, to be sure, when it evaluates ethical conduct. In the ethical submission to God the prevailing theology does see an

## THE BATTLE FRONTS OF BARTHIANISM

actual relation to God, particularly in the school of Ritschl. Here man, by his obedience, is held capable of absorbing the divine will into his own. This also Barthianism sloughs off with a bland *finitum non capax infiniti*. Not only natural man, but also the Christian, according to the new theology, is unable to do the will of God. The purpose of ethics, therefore, is to arouse despair, to achieve a profound shock to human existence by God—the conviction of a defendant by an unbribable judge.

The older theology has not been deserted by this seriousness of purpose to the extent that its critique seems to indicate. It does not, however, in every instance draw the same theological conclusions from this theological ethos. It does not desist from giving this ethos form in a definite system of ethics, which we cannot dispense with in our daily life. For it not only takes man seriously, but also the life he must live and which at every moment demands of him concrete ethical decisions. It is evident here that the question of “synergism” has not as yet been completely fought out by evangelical theology. In the next chapter this question will reappear in concrete form.

(c) A third fundamental problem of the theological discussion is the applicability of the dialectical method. What is the dialectical method? And what is disputable about it? A method must be adequate to its object. It must therefore be indicated in the theological method that God is not simply the object

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

of our thinking but that there is a qualitative difference between the human and the divine nature. Man, therefore, can stand only in a dialectical relation to God, i.e., not as spectator, not as investigator, but in a relation of dialogue, in the tension of an "existential" meeting. The parallel of Hegel's dialectic does not apply here, but rather Kant's doctrine of antinomies, according to which transcendental operations of the human mind become antinomies, unsolvable and unharmonizable contradictions which discursive thinking cannot bring to any satisfying synthesis.

In this, philosophically speaking, the wholly irrational is given expression or, religiously speaking, the inextricable mystery of God's hidden nature which, in respect to human nature, can only assume a relation of tension. An antinomy not solvable is disquieting for the human mind, in whose quest for unifying harmony a desire to rule is expressed. The subordination of reality under a unifying principle gives man a superiority over things which he at least experiences as thinkable. This the dialectical method wants to obviate. It wants to keep alive the dialogue between God and man as the only form adequate to this relation. The dialectical tension between opposite concepts deals less with conceptual than with dynamic poles, or pincers rather, between which man is placed. This dynamic character of dialectics must be kept in mind. Sin and grace are not concepts but forces which seize upon man. The dialectical method thus corresponds to the conflict-character, to the aspect of

## THE BATTLE FRONTS OF BARTHIANISM

responsibility and that of uncertainty, which characterizes the religious relation.

It is inevitable that the discursive and the dialectical method must reflect the contrast between the old and the new theology. But do they deal with the same reality?

The discursive method seeks to grasp religious reality to the extent in which it enters into human consciousness or experience. Herein lies an admission that the transcendental itself cannot be grasped by man and that it cannot be presented by his science.

Consequently this method restricts itself to the presentation of the projection of the transcendental upon the human level. However, Barthianism scornfully considers as mere "religion" that which does not reach out beyond the limits of the human mind, because its object is but an extract of human consciousness.

But it is not equally clear what the dialectic method seeks to present. This method is not content merely to present religion as an experienced fact. Indeed, this is put aside as humanism. And this method finds it just as impossible to present the transcendence of God in its inconceivable superiority and its other-worldliness, for that would be contradictory to its very principle. Its actual theme, consequently, is the fact, the act, and the content of the divine Revelation. The revealed Word becomes the sole and exclusive object of biblical science, as well as of dogmatics.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

### THE CONFLICT WITH CONTEMPORARY SCIENCE

Now there arises the debatable scientific question: To what extent can Revelation be the object of a scientific method? It is the object of the church's message, especially the sermon. Shall theological science become preaching or can the content of preaching be science? To this question Harnack, particularly, called attention.

If the "Christian" is not a member of human society, according to the Tambach lecture of Karl Barth, he really never has to face science, for science is a function of society. It is the application and practice of its collective reason upon the occasion of any given impulse. The Christian, however, is also a member of human society just because he is in the world—if, indeed, we are not playing with words. Granted that he is a citizen of heaven, not only after the end of time but even now, he is also, however, a citizen of the world; he suffers hunger and thirst; he has to work, and above all he must daily and hourly rub elbows with other people who stand upon this earth.

Science is not only a concern for abstract truth, but it is also a most promising attempt among men who are able to think scientifically, to understand each other. Whoever strives, along with others, to attain to an understanding of what is true, will have to translate subjective experiences and transcendental Revelation into the common concept-language of science. In this process, to be sure, a reduction occurs

## THE BATTLE FRONTS OF BARTHIANISM

over whose degree and validity apologetics have stood guard until now, trying to save the religious reality from a complete reduction to the scientific world of concepts, and seeking to preserve for it the character of the "incoördinable," as the French philosopher Gourd did, for instance. But the effort to be scientific compelled apologetics to use the concept-language of science. As long as the scientific claim insisted on a "hole-proof" explanation and on a closed system of knowledge, this endeavor met with great difficulties. Every form of apologetics sought at best to find in such a system the place where the "irreducible" could be introduced at least as an imaginary quantity.

At this point Barthianism launches forth not with apologetics but with a vigorous offensive by limiting the scientific claims as such; it calls attention to their questionability and their provisional character and tries to replace the purely intellectual truth-concept of science with one far more profound.

According to Barth, truth is determined not by the logical principle of identity and contradiction. Truth is that which corresponds to God, the agreement with God, or finally, that which we know only through Revelation. With this contention science's claim to absoluteness is attacked at its very roots and science, as a relative quantity, is forced back inside its boundaries.

This aggressive attitude receives encouragement from within natural science itself in the form of the new relativism, which is about to replace a period of

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

scientific absolutism.<sup>1</sup> The contingency of the all-powerful law of nature has already been shown by Boutroux, and a physicist like Weyl has even raised the question whether the law of causality might not be only a special case of "statistics." Whatever is established by science is of no importance at all for the "existential" realism of the God-relation which does not lie open to any observation on the part of natural science. And this pertains especially to psychology, where Brunner in his *Christian Psychology* rejected the claim of natural science to know the soul, and conceives of knowledge proceeding from an "existential" God-relation as a recognizance in the medium of the divine.

The mental sciences experienced the same rejection of their claim to understand history or indeed to uncover the truth in the unbroken sequence of events. History, as a science, has accordingly again become questionable and hazy. This holds for Bible history also, inasmuch as it is history, i.e., an object or construction of the human mind. The significance of Bible history lies in the evaluation of the contingent character of that which is individual and unique, as a category of the divine activity.

The dialectic philosophy of religion as Brunner<sup>2</sup> and Bauhofer<sup>3</sup> particularly have developed it, tries

<sup>1</sup> For this whole section compare A. Titius, *Natur und Gott*, 1926 (Second edition, 1930).

<sup>2</sup> Brunner, *Religionsphilosophie*, Oldenbourg. Brunner, *Theologie und Ontologie. Zeitschrift fuer Theologie und Kirche*, 2, 1931.

<sup>3</sup> Bauhofer, *Das Metareligioese*, Hinrichs, 1930.

## THE BATTLE FRONTS OF BARTHIANISM

very impressively to carry out this reduction of the scientific and religious claim and to draw the boundaries beyond which, philosophically speaking, lies the Unattainable of the "Meta-religious." This Unattainable, the Totally Other, the truly Transcendent cannot be attained by a scientific nor by a religious method; science can only refer to it as a concept lying at the extreme boundary line. Brunner warns theology point-blank not to return to the scientific "house of slavery."

Science today, with the exception of its admission of relativism and its turning to objectivism, does not appear inclined to accept Barthianism's theory of knowledge. Titius,<sup>6</sup> for instance, does admit that in theology we are concerned with a fact not scientifically verifiable, but denies that a knowledge through faith is an adequate substitute for scientific knowledge. But at this point it is of prime importance for Barthianism that it should not remain merely a theological disputation.

Since the conflict upon these three battle fronts assumes varying forms, after these fundamental references we shall show, in the next chapter, how this meeting between the old and the new takes place concretely within the several countries and churches.

<sup>6</sup> Titius, *Ist systematische Theologie als Wissenschaft moeglich?* 1931.

## CHAPTER IV

### BARTHIANISM ON ITS WAY THROUGH THE CHURCHES

IN our study of contemporary Christendom it is illuminating to observe the effect of Barthianism in the various churches, the problems it meets, and the assent or opposition it arouses. A portrayal of this effect, however, can be offered only with important reservations. In no country is the church a unity—*dolus est in generalibus*.

Impressions and opinions are often dependent upon casual meetings. Tradition, national psychology, factions, confessional barriers, the religious equilibrium or the religious unrest of a church, all play their part in this discussion, as do also differences of language and race. Yet the question of this effect is not simply a psychological or sociological problem. It must at the same time be dealt with as a question of fundamental truth. The Barthians admit that there are confessional truths, which may very well exist side by side, since the divine Word is answered by man in different ways, according to the concrete situation in which this Word strikes him. However, it remains obscure how the question of truth can be approached and discussed as a common Christian task, without intercourse between countries, without intensive studies

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

of the partial truths of the other churches, or without mutual approach and good will. We are here touching upon the ecumenical problem which will be presented in the final chapter.

What, for the most part, helps to open the road for Barthianism is the ecclesiastical uneasiness of the present time, the consciousness of losing ground both among the people and in the intellectual world, of not having the right message for the times and above all, the complete uncertainty of a world which somehow faces the end, our estrangement from God and our yearning for Him after the world has proved so disappointing. In this sense Barthianism seems to be linked in a quasi-subterranean fashion with a universal attitude and with a general consciousness of being on the eve of a new era, and it is obviously only a part of a broader movement, which reaches far deeper than into theology alone.

This presentation of the effects of a theology upon the various churches does not presume to be complete. A person who enters into a new sphere of life sees many things differently from one who has been at home there for a long time. The world and even the church are moving rapidly and are in constant commotion, so that one cannot twice enter the same church without noticing a new kind of atmosphere. Thus on my many visits to America I found a different mood each time, a different problem, a noticeably new movement. Today, not the dead but the living are riding hard. The unrest in the churches is often,

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

of course, betrayed by a few isolated voices only. But they are the registrations of a seismograph which indicates profounder disturbances.

### GERMAN SWITZERLAND

Switzerland is the birthplace of the movement. It has not, however, found its strongest response here. With the exception of Gogarten and Bultmann the first leaders of the movement are Swiss. Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, and Eduard Thurneysen sprang from an intellectually active Swiss bourgeoisie, which possessed sufficient spiritual vitality to be able to sense the currents of a new time, new tasks, new demands even upon the churches in the new social movement, which made its appearance so tempestuously. All three entered into a close relationship with socialism and experienced in it the first shattering of their secure bourgeois ecclesiasticism. Religious socialism was their first hope. The failure of socialism as a revolutionary power for peace was their first disappointment. It was a bad blow to them when the socialists of all lands joined the war.

All three reached positions of wide popular influence while still exceptionally young. When Karl Barth, coming directly from the university, served for a short time as vicar in the writer's former church in Geneva, the unusual impetus of his theological character, his boundless delight in criticism, and his refreshing lack of respect for all that is obviously too human, caused the intellectually alive portion of his

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

listeners to take notice. The radicalism of his religious seriousness compelled decision but also brought about dissension. After a pastorate at Safenwil, that abounded in tensions, Switzerland soon lost him to Germany. He was first called to the faculty of Goettingen, then he went to Muenster, thence to Bonn where he is attracting large theological audiences, many coming from foreign countries.<sup>1</sup>

Emil Brunner,<sup>2</sup> who is the son of a teacher in Zurich, likewise made his exit somewhat tempestuously out of the complacent *Weltanschauung* of a Christian bourgeoisie. For a time he recognized in Bergson the intellectual influence which would carry him to new shores. He soon abandoned him, however, and having been awarded the Francis Brown Fellowship at the Union Theological Seminary, New York, there became acquainted with an altogether different church life. This led him into opposition and to a crisis, which soon made itself felt in a keen criticism of civilization. His inner convictions matured

<sup>1</sup> Barth, *Wort Gottes und Theologie*, 1925; translated by Douglas Horton, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, Pilgrim Press, 1928. *Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes, Prolegomena zur christlichen Dogmatik*, 1927.—*Der Roemerbrief* in several editions.—Numerous contributions to the magazine *Zwischen den Zeilen*.—*Christian Life*, translated by J. Strathearn McNab, Student Christian Movement, 1930.—H. und K. Barth, *Zur Lehre vom Heiligen Geist*, 1930. For bibliography see Koepp.

<sup>2</sup> Brunner, *Grenzen der Humanitaet*, 1922.—*Philosophie und Offenbarung*, 1925.—*Mystik und das Wort*, 1924.—*Religionsphilosophie evangelischer Theologie*, 1927.—*Der Mittler*, 1927 (an English translation will soon be published by the Lutterworth Press).—*The Theology of Crisis*, 1929.—*The Word and the World*, 1931.—*Das Gebot und die Ordnungen*, 1932.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

in the quiet of the country pastorate of Obstalden in the Canton of Glarus, where he took up the critical analysis of Schleiermacher. The University of Zurich then called him to its theological faculty and from there, by means of lecture tours, his activity now extends far beyond the boundaries of his own country to America, England, Holland, Austria, and to the north.

Eduard Thurneysen<sup>\*</sup> grew up in the refined intellectual and cultural environment of Basle. In him, likewise, the new inspiration matured within the narrow bounds of a country pastorate, that of Leutwil. Then he entered the lists of ecclesiastical combat in St. Gall and a few years ago those of Basle in the pulpit of Oekolampad. He is a preacher and pastor by the grace of God and has personally made a considerable contribution to the development of Barth.

Switzerland, which had already given considerable impetus (through Kutter and Ragaz) to the formation of religious socialism, has again, through these three theologians, become the starting-point of a movement which today reaches far beyond the borders of individual countries and churches.

Swiss Protestantism has a comparatively simple spiritual structure. The religious disposition of Swiss evangelical Christianity was determined quite uniformly by the Reformed tradition, although this has passed through both rationalism and pietism. It is,

<sup>\*</sup> *Wort Gottes und die Kirche*, 1927. For complete Barthian bibliography see Koepf.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

however, more the Reformed sobriety in religious expression, the democratic simplicity in social attitude and organization of the congregation, the rational basic position of Zwingli, the practically active Christianity, that have asserted themselves in this after-effect of tradition, rather than the central dogmatical Reformed position, the sovereignty of God, dual predestination, and church discipline.

The democratic sovereignty of the people and their religious customs have often developed into an important competitor of the divine Sovereign. Predestination the writer has heard discussed only in sermons in America, while ecclesiastical and lay statements in Switzerland have shown that the religious motive of this doctrine was no longer even understood. Church discipline is no longer found, except in the control exercised by local tradition. As a genuinely Reformed heritage, the organization of the church and the religious sobriety in cult and Lord's Supper have perhaps been preserved most purely. The unity of the Reformed tradition, the fact that the Swiss people have remained in one great Reformed block, the absence of struggles with divergent churches in one's own country, have to a high degree fostered the formation of a uniform church life, a religious disposition and ways of thinking.

This has fostered the formation of a common Protestant consciousness, giving greater emphasis to that which unites than to that which differentiates. It is, for instance, far less conscious of that antithesis to

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

Lutheranism, which the latter still emphasizes so strongly—at least to a greater extent than does Reformed Switzerland.

In its attitude toward its own history Swiss Protestantism has undergone a certain change. The younger theological generation evinces a closer relationship to Calvin than to Zwingli. It was very fortunate for Switzerland that under Bullinger an understanding had been reached between the Zwinglian and the Calvinistic type, which found classic expression in the *Confessio Helvetica Posterior* as well as in the various *Consensus*. This did not prevent Zwingli from remaining the dominating spirit of German Switzerland, while Basle retained a certain Lutheran trend, and Calvin molded western Switzerland spiritually, although not all of his distinctive doctrines survived. The stronger following which Calvin is finding among the younger theological generation, is due primarily to the fact that he was the first to formulate the entire Reformed viewpoint into a definite theological system, which still exerts a compelling influence. It is also due to the fact that he did not, like Zwingli, surrender to the rationalistic and humanistic influences, especially with reference to the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. This theological position, furthermore, was not given form nor was it accentuated in polemics against other reformers, and therefore it still presents a possible bridge to the thoughts of his great teacher, Luther. In addition, his ethical and religious radicalism proves more at-

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

tractive than the union of religion and culture, Christianity and politics, as Zwingli had represented them. Zwingli's attitude toward war is also the subject of keen criticism by theological pacifists.

This Reformed character is found in Switzerland in the small independent canton churches; it is stirred by inner conflicts between the church parties. The struggles of former years have now, however, given way to a certain equilibrium. At any rate a *modus vivendi* has been found in most churches, made possible on the one hand by the infiltration of Bible criticism even into conservative evangelical circles, and on the other by the relinquishing of pure rationalism on the part of the liberals, as well as by the disappointment they experienced in their efforts at reconciliation with the cultural bourgeois elements.

Into this comparative quiet there have come two very disturbing and very effective ferments. First, religious socialism and then Barthianism. Both are basically related to each other in that Karl Barth has come forth out of the former group, while Brunner also upholds its claims.

The chief spokesmen of the religious socialists were Kutter and Ragaz. The difference between these two has not been without influence upon the growth of Barthianism. Kutter and Blumhardt influenced it by taking seriously the absolute sovereignty of God and His activity, which soon prompted opposition to the assertion of social-Christian and social-political activity as Ragaz represents it.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

Barthianism has come to us in the garb of this religio-social movement. The new element in it was hardly perceived at first and appeared as a simple development of the thoughts of Blumhardt and Kutter. The new theology did not, therefore, cause the same violent reaction in Switzerland as it did in Germany. A productive disquiet did not set in until the movement flowed back again from Germany into the Swiss church world, and Brunner definitely aligned himself with it. Then, of course, the attack upon modern, Reformed church life was keenly felt.

The external forms of religious association are ecclesiastical organization and factions. In themselves they are of no religious importance. In the state church of a particular canton the latest tradition is always the determining power. It supplies the type and the character of the religious union. The religious movements or factions possess more character and are more active than the churches themselves, which in Switzerland have minimized their confession even in their liturgical forms or else have surrendered it altogether, simply for the sake of peace. In a national church there must needs be tolerance, breadth, even compromise if it would continue to exist as such.

The small membership of these churches and their relative exclusiveness one from another, which has been overcome only through the founding of a church federation, gave them the character of being rather suburban or even family affairs, as long as modern

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

life did not bring about a mingling of the people, and so subject large sections of them to the spiritual changes of the industrial revolution. The life of the church was profoundly shaken by these changes. The educated class and the laboring masses can hardly be said to possess any longer an inner relationship to the church. To be sure the chasm between the church and the laboring element is not nearly so great, so far as the mass of the working people is concerned, as is the case in Germany or in France—Switzerland has regular organizations of socialistic church members. The conservative evangelical circles depend more upon the middle classes, who live unto themselves and have little influence upon public life. The liberal circles, on the other hand, have appealed more to the independent and culturally interested bourgeoisie, which has, however, increasingly deserted them. The regular maintenance of church life, proper church attendance and church activity easily masked the real gravity of the situation.

Small groups, especially of pastors, suffered the more from the religious distress and spiritual poverty of the times. The great mass of German-Swiss Protestantism could hardly be called a characteristic confession any longer when compared with its original strictness in dogma, church life and church discipline, and its original sternness toward itself. A soft latitudinarianism hardly recognized the essential differences of religious and confessional life. The war had not affected the inner lives of people as

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

something real and terrible, and had not revealed the profound hollowness extending to the uttermost depths of the heart, as it had done in the case of other peoples. Whatever was genuine and characteristic found its roots just as much or even more in the tradition of popular history as in the consciousness of the characteristics of a particular confession and its ethos.

As a result the church drew upon itself an increasing criticism from which no well-intentioned, practical activity, no carefully guarded usage, could protect it.

Barthian theology acted as the strongest kind of criticism of this feeble churchliness. It operated more upon a basis of principle than any previous criticism of the church had done, and it was characterized by an altogether different impetus than the ordinary depreciation of the church. This criticism hit the bull's eye; it was hurled from an invisible center of faith. At first, however, it did not succeed in disturbing the quietude of the church. Even in Switzerland the prophet goes without honor. Moreover, Barthianism made its first appearance clad too conspicuously in the garb of religio-social criticism.

The real, intellectual controversy with the new theology was taken over by the factions, the conservative-evangelical, the liberal and the religious-social. The latter was absolutely split by Barthianism. One group despaired of the effectiveness of the church and its agencies and the possibility of their transfor-

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

mation, and now expects all salvation eschatologically from God alone.

The other group of the religious-socialists saw in Barthianism the paralysis of their best activistic efforts, the defection from promising beginnings, the transforming of a dynamic, religious inspiration into mere theology, a theological complication of great and simple demands on the Christian conscience. The whole disappointment over this defection is revealed when Ragaz, in the *Neuen Wegen*, takes Barthian theology sharply to account.

The liberal theology of Switzerland may today be characterized more by the insistence upon independent research and scientific method than by the old rationalism of the fathers of liberal "Reform," or the endeavor to enforce, at any price, a synthesis of modern culture with Christianity. The liberalism of the years of active struggle is today met with in only a very few men. The liberal groups of today, who are followers rather of Ritschl and Troeltsch or Wernle than of Biedermann or Pfeiderer, are mostly disappointed by the scant influence of religion upon cultural and political liberalism. They would probably be much more receptive toward the new theology and much more ready for a new orientation, if the Barthians were better builders of bridges. The Barthians, especially the younger ones, have heaped abuse and disgrace upon liberal theology. Such well-deserving theologians as Wernle and Eberhard Vischer have been treated with such a lack of con-

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

sideration that the resistance of more liberally minded circles is entirely understandable, all the more so since the appearance of Barth's *Dogmatik*, which was received as a re-orientation of supranaturalism after the prophetic challenge of the *Roemerbrief*.

Yet there are beginnings of an understanding, especially in the theological faculties. But up to the present moment, in spite of Werner's<sup>4</sup> book and its contrasting of Albert Schweitzer and Karl Barth, liberalism has not been able to rouse itself sufficiently to reply to the Barthian theology with a counter-thrust from a similar religious depth.

Conservative theology and pietistic church circles gratefully recognized in the new theology an ally in the maintenance of the evangelical position, but could not have absolute confidence in it for three reasons.

In the first place, Barthianism is too indifferent toward Bible criticism and suffers it to rule in its own particular realm, although it does not make the essentials of theology dependent upon its decisions. The new theology furthermore clears away that apodictic and comfortable assurance of faith by which these groups live. A brilliant remark of Barth's on the occasion of a discussion with this conservative group, illuminates this contrast like a rocket. The conservative swordsman in the meeting tried to corner Barth with the question, "Tell us then, Professor, is there

<sup>4</sup> M. Werner, *Das Weltanschauungsproblem bei Karl Barth und Albert Schweitzer*, 1924.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

an assurance of faith?" to which Barth replied: "There is no assurance of faith, *He* (God) *gives assurance of faith.*"<sup>6</sup> And lastly, conservative church circles resist the Barthian theology because it acts like dynamite in church politics and breaks up the old factional groups. This opposition is so strong that Barth himself, after he had fought with the conservatives and with the liberals, declared that he could more easily agree with the latter than with the former.

Fortunately, however, the discussion with the new theology is being withdrawn more and more from ecclesiastical party strife and the mere theological debate of the schools.

The deeper and more fruitful discussions are taking place not through the use of party slogans but in the small groups of pastors who allow themselves to be persuaded by Barth and Brunner simply to read Calvin again, finding themselves profoundly shaken in their institutional church life by Calvin's *Institutes*. This kind of discussion is taking place in active theological circles, as for example when there is a gathering about Professor Schaedelin in the Bernese health resorts, in order to discuss once more the essential nature of the church. It is taking place among students who, with Brunner, are venturing into a theocentric theology. And finally, one finds it also in educated parish circles, which have heard in sermons

<sup>6</sup> The German in this case is more pointed than the English can reproduce. The question was "So sagen Sie nun, Herr Professor, gibt es denn Glaubensgewissheit?" And the reply: "Es gibt keine Glaubensgewissheit, *Er* (Gott) gibt Glaubensgewissheit."

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

and in Barth's *Roemerbrief* the sounding of the "great bell" in the midst of the ecclesiastical darkness.

So far the discussions have led to no definite results, but for the present they are continuing to be real discussions and thus are dynamic, tense, questioning, always endangered, however, by theologizing, by the forming of faction by a new orthodoxy, by polemics, and perhaps even by the pride of discovery.

Upon preaching, Barthianism has exerted a narrowing but also a deepening influence. It has robbed conservative Christianity of some of its assurance and has taken from liberalism its confidence in civilization. Theologically it was of great advantage to this discussion that the younger and more systematic Brunner cleared away many hindrances to understanding, and that in Thurneysen a preacher had arisen who could realize the conciliatory and gentle ways of Oekolampad in disputatious Basle.

The essential gain of all previous discussion can be recognized in a new understanding of the central position of the Reformation, as it is defined by sin and grace.

A further gain is realized in the more serious reconsideration of the church's nature and in a rediscovery of the connection with the Swiss reformers, primarily with Calvin. What had been worked up anew by Staehelin, Wernle, and W. Koehler in the field of history, is now made available also to the

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

church as a living challenge by the younger generation, Brunner, Thurneysen, Ernst Staehelin, Schrenk, Farner, Maurer, Blanke and Grob.

### GERMANY

It is more difficult to survey the effect of Barthianism in Germany and it is also less easy to grasp. The country is too large, the theological faculties are not uniform; church relations are too thoroughly organized, intellectual movements are too intricate and too strongly identified with other interests. The churches of the West and the South have been permeated by Barthian influences more than those of the North and the East. This is due to the radius of influence from the theological centers of learning, but also to the greater intellectual mobility of the West, to the Reformed influences which are operative there, as well as to the stronger social tensions which clear the way for the new theology better than is possible in the conservative East. To this must be added that German Protestantism has concerned itself with the new theology so arduously in practically all realms—in theology, in the church, in missions—that an extraordinarily rich but by no means uniform view of this discussion has resulted. No one can today survey this situation completely. It is more important, therefore, to sketch the broader outlines of this discussion than to follow up its theological ramifications in detail.

The first problem that had to come to a head in

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

Germany was the attitude Lutheranism would assume toward Barthianism, strongly determined as it is by Reformed influences.

Barth was called to Germany by the Reformed Church. In Goettingen he did not have an easy position as a Reformed theologian. He found himself in a country where the Reformed Church primarily had to bear the costs of church union. He soon developed into such a spiritual force, however, that he compelled all groups and divisions to enter into discussion with him. How rapidly this influence grew is demonstrated by the various editions of his commentary on Romans, of which 15,000 copies were printed within a few years, and again by the list of subscribers to the magazine *Zwischen den Zeiten*, in which the whole movement was able to gather a considerable staff of co-workers. Wherever Barth took hold, sparks flew; a new grouping of minds, and discharges, like those of a thunderstorm, resulted.

The new theology possessed an irreverence for the "all-too-human," such as only a Swiss can command. He scattered a "pinch of spice" on all the dishes of German Protestantism and forced all groups and schools of thought into a discussion of such depth and breadth as has not taken place in any other country.

### *A. Barthianism and the Confessional Conflict*

It is not to be counted among the least of the specific effects of Barthianism that the relationship between Lutheranism and the Reformed Church, or

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

rather the relationship between the most profound religious motives of Luther and the Reformed churchmen, is being re-studied in a new manner.

One might call the new theology a conception of the Reformed spirit on the soil of Lutheranism. This is said not only because at first it found a stronger echo and wider sphere of influence in Lutheran Germany than in the country of its origin. Rather, it revived the historical relationship which existed with reference to Luther as seen from the viewpoint of Calvin. It drew out of Luther the basic Reformational thesis, grasped it and worked upon it in the Reformed spirit. Even at this point it is proving truly Reformed and Swiss in that it suffers no antithesis to Luther's Reformational position to arise, and perhaps even lets it prevail in its deepest sense over against Zwingli in the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Brunner's address at the Commemoration exercises at Marburg showed that he, the Reformed churchman, would be more likely to agree with Luther's conception of the Holy Communion than with that of his countryman, Zwingli. Luther, as a matter of fact, is counted one of its church fathers by German Reformed Switzerland. This found expression at the celebrations at Augsburg \* in 1930, despite the fact that the Augsburg Confession and Luther himself rejected the poorly understood representatives of the Reformed Church.

\* Commemorating the four hundredth anniversary of the presentation of the Augsburg Confession.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

In the attitude of Barthianism to Luther there is taking place, therefore, a rapprochement, rather than a conflict with Lutheranism. There is an inner acceptance of the basic and perhaps unpolemically interpreted contentions of Luther, i.e., rather a real union, in place of the former historical struggle, an understanding of the *Sola Fide* by means of the *Soli Deo Gloria* and vice versa. This does not, of course, in the least hinder the criticism of the contrary position, but in the discussion with the Lutheran theology continual appeal is made from Lutheranism to Luther himself, and from the poorly comprehended and poorly interpreted Luther to the Luther who is better informed and more profoundly to be comprehended, namely the younger Luther. In other words, it is seeking again the truly Reformational and pivotal conviction of justification by faith. This it does even in the face of a historical understanding of Luther as Ritschl and Holl furnished it, and which seemed incontestable from the historical point of view.

We may, therefore, understand Barthianism in this respect as a daring and magnificent endeavor—unconcerned about its own possessions—to understand Lutheranism by understanding Luther himself, to comprehend it anew with Reformed love, energy, theology, and largeness of heart. We may understand it as the continuation of the quickening of Luther on Reformed soil which, according to Wernle,

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

had begun in Switzerland only after the awakening of the pietistic spirit.'

Barth endeavors to force Lutheranism as well as the Reformed Church into a crisis which does not originate at a confessional-religious boundary, but where all confessions and churches confront a crisis: the existential meeting with God. It is very fortunate for this endeavor, an endeavor which is bound to achieve historical importance, that Gogarten, a Lutheran within the ranks of Barthianism, is also working upon the old, historical contrast in the same deepened spirit. There has evolved here, in spite of later divergencies between Barth and Gogarten,<sup>1</sup> a Reformed-Lutheran dialectical community of labor, which is built out of harder materials than the bricks of the former confessionalism.

The Barthian Zwinglians and Calvinists are really accepting the profoundest anxiety of Luther as a question put to the Reformed Church and are thereby putting an end to unfruitful controversy without any conscious thought of church union.

But official Lutheranism, on the other hand, does

<sup>1</sup> Compare Wernle, *Schweizerischer Protestantismus im 18. Jahrhundert*, Tübingen, 1923.

<sup>2</sup> Gogarten, who was at first strongly influenced by Fichte and who was close to Arthur Bonus, also went into theology from the ministry. He was professor first in Jena and now in Breslau.—*Religioese Entscheidung*, 1921.—*Ich glaube an den dreieinigen Gott*, 1926—*Schuld der Kirche gegen die Welt*, 1929—For further announcements of literature about all Barthians see Koepp, *Gegenwärtige Geisteslage*, 1930.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

not similarly accept the Reformed position as a question put to itself.

*Ultra-conservative Lutheranism*<sup>\*</sup> warns against Barth as something foreign to the nature of Lutheranism and as introducing a new spirit in place of the spirit of the Scriptures. In the emphasis upon the contrast between Time and Eternity it beholds an introduction of philosophy into theology "whereby the concrete biblical concepts are transformed into pure philosophical abstractions." On the other hand, they decline to accept his principle of biblical interpretation. His theology is in this respect a "complete overthrow of the principle of inspired Scripture." A deep chasm is discovered by the critic when Barth calls Luther's question about the gracious God just a monk's problem and puts over against it the Reformed question "about the unapproachable, solely active God, remote from world and life." This chasm is also observed in contrasting the Reformed conception of faith as a gift from God and as obedience, over against the Lutheran view according to which faith is confidence.

The chief contrast, however, Lutheranism sees in the Barthian attitude toward the assurance of salvation, which Barth declares to be a "morbid interest" and through which he "carries out the most destructive self-criticism upon the vague spiritualism ('Geis-

<sup>\*</sup> *Schrift und Bekenntnis*, No. 4, 1926.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

terei') of the whole Reformed Church from the days of Zwingli to the present time."

This Lutheranism, of course, does not want to "hear of the defeat of all theology and considers that a confession of Reformed weakness," i.e., of the defeat of Barthianism itself. It is quite evident that the driving power of Barthianism, which must, of course be designated as Reformed, was, in this instance, not understood.

The judgment of Althaus <sup>10</sup> shows much greater appreciation and is more in the nature of a real discussion. Here there is a real contact. First of all he declines to conduct this discussion with confessional nomenclature, since it did not originate in the Reformation message nor in the historical Reformed position. Yet one recognizes here common ground which may be approached from every side. It is the exaltation of God over all the world, the existential responsibility of man to Him, the Reformation conception of sin and grace.

Althaus draws sharp distinctions, however, with respect to the reality of revelation and the assurance of salvation. He also criticizes the recourse to ontology, whereby philosophy enters into theology, and history is depreciated by an "abstract scheme" of time and eternity. Even Christology becomes "bottomless." "What have Barth's abstractions and constructions of the doctrines of Trinity and of the

<sup>10</sup> In Schweitzer, *Das religioese Deutschland*, 1928.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

Incarnation still in common with faith in Jesus?" Nevertheless, conservative theology must learn from the Barthian theology.

It may seem remarkable that in Koeberle's <sup>11</sup> discussion with the new theology a Lutheran himself demands the necessary complementing of pure justification by sanctification, and thereby rather becomes receptive to a Reformed thought, but he turns and uses it against the Barthian theology.

The Neo-Lutheran Doerries,<sup>12</sup> moved by altogether different apprehensions, warns against the "smuggling in" of Reformed elements, of which this theology is said to be guilty. He says flatly that whoever follows Barth, renounces Luther, for Barth, he says, proclaims a God of negation in contrast to Lutheranism, which above all recognizes a God who is near.

What this neo-Lutheran "Culture-Protestantism" is driving at can be seen in the assertion that to believe in God means to believe in the world, because the incarnation takes place in it. It utilizes the thesis of Max Weber and Troeltsch, regarding the Calvinistic origin of capitalism, in order to point out the legalistic, calculating, Reformed character. The criticism of the State, on the basis of principle, is met with nationalistic arguments.

Here we strike that lack of understanding which has already been remarked in Harnack's reply in

<sup>11</sup> Koeberle, *Rechtfertigung und Heiligung*, 1929.

<sup>12</sup> *Der ferne und der nahe Gott*, 1927.—*Am Scheidewege*, 1928.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

*Christliche Welt.* The Barthian theology not only calls the Reformed Church back to Calvin but also Lutherans back to Luther. The joint struggle for the right appreciation of Luther, which is important also to the Reformed churchman, brings about connections which could hardly be feasible from the purely confessional standpoint. One may well speak of a super-confessional effect of Barthianism, because it is again endeavoring to win back the basic Reformation position, which is lying before or beyond its confessional, theological expression. The first concern of Barthianism is the basic inquiry of the Reformation, which is independent of theological controversy, and not the reconciliation of the confessions.

Walther Koehler emphatically points out the debt which a correct understanding of Luther owes to Barthian theology. A new kind of confessional discussion has thereby been made possible. Many people no longer understand the old conflicts in their former polemical form, even though the final decisions on some points will have to be rendered against one or the other reformer. Thus Lutherans and Reformed could continue the Marburg Conference with its fourteen points—in which unity was achieved without politically striving after external union—into a depth where *Sola Fide* and *Soli Deo Gloria* set forth the same distress of sinful man and express the same trust in grace. The boundary line, however, is indicated by Elerts' *Morphologie des Luthertums*.

B. *Criticism and Defense of the Church*

It is especially in Germany that the desire of Barthianism to be an ecclesiastical theology brings it into conflict with the various forms of church organization: the official church, the church of the pietistic groups, the church of Protestant individualism, the active church or the "Home Mission."

(a) We have here, first of all, the official church with its boards, the Synods and pastors, the official national church, into which the former state church has been reorganized after the Supreme headship (*Summepiscopatie*) of the princes had been abolished. There has remained a strong predilection for an official ecclesiastical government of the church and this was given voice in the desire for a bishop. A new creative will is at the same time trying to build the church from the ground up, basing it on the parishes and the people. It aims to win back the masses that have fallen away by popular evangelistic work, by inviting the laboring classes as well as the educated, by active and circumspect charity and church welfare work. In the "Century of the Church" the spiritual, invisible church should be complemented by the institutional church, the church that is organized. The church of the Spirit must have its parallel in the world; a church that engages in ecclesiastical politics, that makes demands of the state, that is an institution as well as a communion,

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

that concerns itself with the schools, that demands its just share of consideration in the formation of theological faculties and that branches out in the great work of Home Missions.

Into this official church life the altogether different conception of the church, according to Barthian theology, has struck like a thunderbolt.<sup>13</sup> It measures the church solely by its faithfulness to the Word of God, not by its accomplishments nor by the excellency of its organization. It sees the spirit of the Grand-Inquisitor of Dostoievski's great parable—who turns Jesus out of the well-organized church—working in the activity of the church, in its pleasure in organizing, in church politics, in its regulation and worldly administration. But the Jesus of Barthianism does not go to the aged Grand-Inquisitor in order to kiss his bloodless, ninety-year-old lips as does the Jesus of Dostoievski, He curses such a church and accuses it of a "Catilinarian conspiracy" against its own nature. Barthianism robs this church of its clear conscience concerning its work and would render it not strong, powerful and conscious of its aim, but poor, weak, obscure, even in its confessional struggle for self-preservation, trusting in God alone in its distress.<sup>14</sup> The church replies to this criticism that Karl Barth is conducting his war against the church on too high a

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Barth, *Not der evangelischen Kirche (Zwischen den Zeiten, 2, 1931).*

<sup>14</sup> Gogarten especially emphasizes the church's debt to the world.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

plane and in too rarefied an atmosphere, and states that he does not know the reality with which it is struggling.

The depreciatory treatment of the official and social labors of the church is rejected as the conceit of the scholar and as ignorance of the immediate demands of practical life. The "pride of the scribe" is judged to be a greater offense than the over-anxiousness of the church's activity.<sup>15</sup>

Barthianism is even declared to be useless for the actual ministry where theological concepts give way before the needs of the people requiring comfort and consolation.<sup>16</sup>

The depreciation of much plain and simple ministerial activity, which is performed in the service of the distressed, of the willing sacrifice of one's own personality in the pastoral care of souls, and in the care for youth in which many a pastor quietly spends himself, is rejected as lack of love and understanding. Even though administration, church politics and organization are small matters, they must also be attended to faithfully lest greater things suffer. They hope that the office itself, with the demands of the day and the urgency of the seemingly secondary tasks, may bring about the necessary adjustments when the new theological generation matures in contact with real life and its distress. For the moment, therefore,

<sup>15</sup> Compare Veller in the *Deutsches Pfarrerblatt*, March 25, 1930.

<sup>16</sup> O. Dibelius, *Die Verantwortung der Kirche*, 1931—compare also *Christliche Welt*, May and September, 1931.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

one can say only that the critical effect of the Barthian theology is felt less in the practical work than in preaching. It is no longer possible to preach in general trivialities where this theology has struck fire. Repentance and faith move into the center. It is to be desired in this connection that the warning of K. Heim <sup>17</sup> be heeded. He points out the danger of making sin a stock phrase and a generality, and considers the consciousness of sin as genuine only when it arises out of a concrete situation.

(b) Besides the official church there is in Germany a new pietistic "group movement," which is, however, immediately brought face to face with the problem of church organization, because of the necessity of giving form to its fellowships. What the movement experiences in its individualistic endeavors is not only a pietistic Christianity of personal emotionalism indifferent to the world, but also the eternally repeated task which confronts every new organization as it also confronts the church itself. The more this group movement, which criticizes the church as a lifeless institution, grows, the more it also will have to face the difficulties and tasks of the church.

The group movement, which is primarily interested in the fostering of the inner life and communion, feels the wrath of the Barthians from an altogether different angle. Not officialism, activity, church-consciousness, organization, are attacked here.

<sup>17</sup> Heim, *Glauben und Denken, Furche*, 1931. Compare also *Furche* 4, 1928.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

Criticism is directed at the certainty of salvation, the secret Pharisaism of the sinner standing afar off, the withdrawal from the outer into the inner world, the sureness and concreteness of religious expression, the sectarian exclusiveness from the church. What has been said before regarding the conflict about the certainty of salvation applies above all to these group circles, which stress the inspiration of the Bible, the blissful experience of salvation, the intimacy with Jesus, the idea of a final sifting, and who are therefore accused of obliterating the distance which lies between God and man.

In spite of all their delight in the opposition to liberalism for which Barthianism is known to them, the Barthian theology is declined in these circles on account of its biblical criticism and its denial of the concrete certainty of salvation as unbiblical. So far it does not seem as though Barthianism had been able seriously to upset the direct assurance of salvation and the confident exclusiveness of these circles.

(c) As an adjunct of the church we must also count that widespread Protestant individualism which made Coleridge say: "I believe in that holy, infallible Church, which alone is able to accord salvation, and of which I am the only member." One finds these individuals who form a church by themselves, not only in modern cultural Protestantism, or in bourgeois moralism, but widely prevalent among the clergy who become ecclesiastical individualists for

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

nothing else than opposition to the government of the church.

These stubborn and sovereign individualists Barthianism calls back to the church as to the place where the fate even of the individual is decided, for the church brings to all the message, which is intended for the individual sinner.

Barthianism is here, of course, only a part of a present phenomenon, which is to be understood as a longing for the church, a rediscovery of the church. Barthianism supports this longing by its criticism of the selfish, religious ego, which considers itself superior to the congregation, and thereby despises the gift of God which is not intended for the individual alone but for the communion as a whole. The quickened interest in the church in Berneuchen, at the Castle of Waldenburg and in many separate circles, is certainly not due only to this theology, but it has been fostered and illuminated by it.

(d) Finally, the "Effective Church" (*Kirche des wirkenden Wortes*), to use this expression of Bishop Rendtdorf's, the church of the "Home Missions," comes under judgment because of this very activity. Barthianism questions the faith basis of this work and considers it a fragmentary thing which would mend the old garment with new patches or, as Thurneysen puts it: "place too small a lid on too big a hole." Its help is human help and "defrauds society of God's help."

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

Its activity is an impatience which cannot wait for God and therefore engages busily in building churches and chapels. Its sentimental mercy is a pietism of love which will end with "the liberalism of Naumann." Its service to the church and for the church is "the new temptation of the church which must be resisted." If the Christian consents to enter into society after the fashion of the "Home Mission," he is subject to the law of the world and estranges himself from the living God who is creating a new world. Direct ethical action is impossible. There is only a listening for God.

It seems that this criticism of "Home Missions" and the practical work of the church in Germany has already had considerable effect. Again and again complaint is made that Barthianism cripples the practical work of the church. H. Lilje even fears a confusion of conscience from such a paralysis through eschatology, which renders present action possible only by a kind of "chiliasm." "We shiver at the thought of a new type of ethics that has come to take the place of the rejected ethics, but which only leaves us helpless and distracted and gives us no other answer than to wait for God." Rhode<sup>18</sup> indeed accepts for the "Home Mission" the call to repentance, but not from the Barthians. The call to repentance must be prompted by sacred love and knowledge of the facts. This is wanting in the Barthian caricatures of

<sup>18</sup> In long and repeated discussions in the church papers of the German Evangelical Church of Posen, 1930.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

this work. They answer its criticism by pointing to Bodelschwingh and to Stoecker, who have demonstrated a piety of love which does not lead to liberalism.

They reply to Barthianism in all seriousness that the church cannot surrender its influence upon public life. "The revelation of God must be realized in a real historical salvation and not in the distance of infinite abstraction." This remoteness of God is unacceptable to "Home Missions." Public life in Russia is pointed out as an illustration of what happens if the Word of God does not become visible, active, commanding obedience. Radical communism has triumphed, but alongside of its frigid abstraction of concepts there is no room for any warm benevolence, any religious press-service (which Barth, by the way, designates as devastating!) and the de-Christianization of the world is in full swing.

If Barthianism combats the "hybris" of human work and action, and sweeps out the last leaven of ecclesiastical Pelagianism, that is certainly to be welcomed. If, however, it should lead to refined eschatological indolence the responsibility for such an ethical by-product of theology would prove hard to bear. It is becoming evident precisely at this point that, because of a preoccupation with fundamental things and a radicalism of faith, a portion of reality is simply not being seen, as Tillich<sup>10</sup> points out, viz., the distress that directly grips heart and will, the obedience of

<sup>10</sup> At different places; comp. also *Religiöse Verwirklichung*.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

faith which wants to help,<sup>20</sup> whether cheerfully or desperately, the Christian realism which sees both the reality of God and the reality of the world, and which simply and faithfully makes God's Word effective in conscience, in heart and even in hand, when a neighbor is in distress. Even Piper,<sup>21</sup> the successor of Karl Barth at Muenster, who sees in Barthianism the stimulus to a new orientation, fears its paralyzing effect upon the immediately necessary work of charity, "which is being encumbered with such problematics that a happy and cheerful rendering of this service is being hindered." Love, obedience, and the molding of life really belong to Biblical Christianity and must remain a task of the church. "What is the use of ethical and dogmatical systems at a time when all of life cries out for a transformation? The man who is hungry, who has no home, who has had no work for years feels himself mocked if he is offered theology. He wants to see life transformed." Wherever this is not attempted theology remains the sport of aristocratic intellectuals and keeps the church from the absolutely necessary task of giving clear advice in concrete situations by means of example and obedience to the Gospel.

The line of battle between the preaching of the "pure Word" and the demand of the "effective Word" does not, of course, lie only between Barthian theology and "Home Missions." It also bounds the

<sup>20</sup> *Innere Mission*, No. 1, 1931.

<sup>21</sup> April, 1928.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

basic social work as it is called for by the Stockholm movement. Of this we will treat in the final chapter.

It was necessary to present the conflict of Barthianism with the present church in Germany in special detail and concretely, for nowhere else does this discussion grip all the strata of church life so thoroughly and so profoundly as here. What has been accomplished in Germany, what has there been fought for and defended, frequently recurs in the discussion with other churches, which took up this problem more slowly.

### *C. German Theology in a Struggle with Itself*<sup>22</sup>

The most fundamental and passionate clash with the Barthian movement is taking place in scientific theology. From the publications of the *Theologentag* of Breslau one can see how the new theology not only ploughs through a single discipline with specific technical questions, but how it grips them all, even that of the Old Testament.

What has been stated in the general review in the second chapter will now be concretely illustrated by various theological problems and controversial questions. It would be presumptuous to claim to be able to view this conflict to-day in its entirety or to be able to judge it conclusively. Our present object can be to discover only the principal theological questions in which the basic antitheses become evident. The fol-

<sup>22</sup> Kattenbusch, *Die deutsche evangelische Theologie seit Schleiermacher*, Toepelmann, 5th edition, 1926.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

lowing presentation, therefore, only intends to illustrate and differentiate the above-mentioned antitheses.

So far as the writer can see and state after a brief orientation, the discussion, as it is taking place in Germany, is concerned with the following theological problems, which in turn comprise all problems of detail:

- (α) Is it possible to have a scientific theology?
- (β) Is a theocentric theology possible?
- (γ) Is a system of Christian ethics possible?

### *(α) Is it possible to have a scientific theology?*

The scientific character of the new theology is contested at its starting-point, the Word of God, also because of its method and finally because of its practical, ecclesiastical interest.

Barthian theology accepts neither God-consciousness, nor experience, nor history as its starting-point, but the Word of God. If this, however, is neither given in history, nor comprehensible in the critical text, nor accessible in a mystic sense, critical theology denies the existence of a feasible basis for scientific theological work.

For Barthian theology the Word is found only in the Scriptures. "But Barth invents a Scripture, which is not identical with anything written and which is never and nowhere to be read" (Siegfried).<sup>11</sup> Common ground for both sides is only offered where

<sup>11</sup> *Das Wort und die Existenz*, 1930.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

Barthian theology admits and demands historical, critical labor. But this common ground possesses an altogether different value of verity for the two opponents. Certain Barthian theologians are certainly not surpassed by scientific theology in critical daring. Bultmann <sup>“</sup> dissolves the historical reliability of the Bible so completely that the remaining and reliable fragments may still have a meaning from the standpoint of *Form Geschichts* (Form Criticism), but they can no longer be used as historical data. In the critical treatment of the historical Bible there is, therefore, no divergence. But Barthian theology denies that this method is adequate to the true object of theology. It claims that the Bible as an historical document is not the Word of God, and inasmuch as it is history, it shares the famous “questionability.” What is referred to here as the working material for theology is not the historical data, the psychological meaning of the given Word, not the historical connection, no real object at all, but a dynamic and existential meeting, where the subject-object relationship, which otherwise controls our thinking, is not dissolved as in mysticism, but is reversed. Man ceases to be the subject which possesses an object. On the other hand, he is not simply an object in the mind or in the hand of an almighty, other subject, but he stands in a relationship of responsibility which must not be, on his part, one of thinking but one of decision. The

<sup>“</sup> Bultmann is teaching New Testament theology in Marburg. His book on *Jesus* is of particular importance to this question.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

true course of this relationship is a chain of decisions. The basic character of this relationship is not logical but voluntaristic and ethical. The concern is not simply with a relationship of subject and object, but with a relationship of an "I" and a "thou."

In his *Weltbild der Zukunft* Karl Heim has demonstrated the relationship of such a conception to the demands of a theological epistemology. Even in 1904 he had pointed out the spontaneous dissolution of the subject-object scheme, the relative character of final reality, the condition of the members of a relation, the impossibility of proving the content of a religious conviction by any secular method of demonstration.<sup>\*\*</sup>

Only a Cartesian epistemology will let the thinking of the subject proceed with such sovereignty as critical theology has done. Barthian theology sees in this the original offence of idealism and would have its famous formula changed into *Cogitat ergo sum*, taking God as the subject of it. With this formula the attempt is made to think in terms of God's Word, i.e., from the standpoint of God as Judge and Savior. The question then arises whether this is conceivable, whether this theology which permits expressions about a relationship to the transcendental is possible as a science. It is the endeavor to think simultaneously from the side of God and of man, namely from the mutual relationship in which they stand. Thus sin and grace constitute such

<sup>\*\*</sup> Compare also *Furche*, April 1928.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

a religious relationship, which in its totality can be presented only by this paradoxical thinking from two opposite sides. This dialectical thinking is like the balancing of a pair of scales where the rising of the one and the sinking of the other stand in a definite relation. The Barthian method seeks to present the mysterious vitality of the I—Thou relationship in a process of reasoning, the paradox of which is alone appropriate to the profound antinomy of the human relation to the infinite.

Herewith Barthian theology rejects the traditional concept of science, in spite of later attempts at rationalizing, and in this respect agrees with Heim, who had admonished theology “to assert the sovereignty of its dogmatical position with its inalienable self-assurance and its prophetic omnipotence.” If, therefore, the formal superficial works of theology are subject to the attack of science, its innermost character is unassailable. Being scientific is no longer the criterion of the truth of theology, but is simply a necessary attempt at adjustment to that part of the world which we possess in our intellectual structure also.

Because of this isolation of Barthianism from science we see before us the chasm which yawns between “scientific” and “Barthian” theology. G. Wobbermin <sup>22</sup> especially has pointed this out. He demands a “comprehending” faith, and places upon theology

<sup>22</sup> On the *Theologentag*, Breslau. *Richtlinien evangelischer Theologie zur Ueberwindung der gegenwärtigen Krise*, 1929.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

the obligation of synthesis instead of analysis, with which Barthian theology would rest content.

At this point the ponderous discussion has come to a standstill and we face the question whether science shall again become the handmaid of theology or whether theology will in turn acknowledge a responsibility toward accepted science.

This question has been formulated with particular harshness and breadth in the journal of the movement itself,<sup>11</sup> by Heinrich Scholz. He offers an exposition of the conditions under which an evangelical theology is possible as science. Minimal and maximal demands are required. The former consists of a "postulate of assertion," which demands freedom from contradiction, and the latter of a "postulate of coherence," which demands that the statements of a science be formulated as a declaration about the objects of a definitely given sphere, or at least they must afterwards be so interpreted. To the maximal demands belongs also the "postulate of control," as an example of which we have physics as a controllable science of reality. To the maximal demands must also be added "the grouping of the statements of a science into principles and propositions, axioms and theorems, dealing not with the religious content, but with the possibility of formal analysis."

In between, there lie the "postulate of independence" and that of "concordance." Even a theology of faith must formally satisfy these postulates if it would

<sup>11</sup> *Zwischen den Zeiten*, No. 2, 1931.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

be acknowledged as science, it must reject occult knowledge and render its findings in the form of accepted scientific concepts. With respect to these demands Scholz denies to the Barthian theology a clear title to a scientific character. For dogmatics at least it is evident that it leaves "the circle of sciences" at this decisive point and must become something altogether different, namely a personal confession of faith which defies every earthly attempt at verification. A large part of these objections applies, of course, to evangelical theology as a whole, which suffers a disadvantage over against Roman Catholic theology in its form of presentation. But it applies particularly to the Barthian theology, since it rejects, for example, a confession of faith regarding the virgin birth,<sup>\*\*</sup> but at the same time "endeavors to realize its character as a science in that it attempts a more or less realizable justification of this act of blind faith." Barth designates this endeavor as "the attempted realization of the most dangerous possibility in a most dangerous moment." Here we must, by the way, point out a pronounced difference between Barth and Brunner which we cannot discuss in this volume, however. According to Barth, theology has really "no abiding place" in the land of science and it is interested only as an afterthought in the demands of science.

In the discussion of this question Scholz was accused of holding a pagan and rationalistic concept

<sup>\*\*</sup> This is not denied by Barth. Cf. his *Dogmatik*, Vol. I. (Translator.)

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

of science and of ignoring the demands of adjusting one's self to the object. This conformity or adjustment to the object the new theology seeks to maintain inviolate methodically by the dialectical method of inquiry.

### (β) *Is a theocentric theology possible?*

The theology of transcendence must answer this question positively, since it is also a theology of *revelation*. A pure theology of transcendence would be pure speculation and without any meaning for us. Transcendence is only conceivable in a relative sense, i.e., in the contrast with immanence. The relation of these poles has ever and again been shifted. The complete secularization or humanizing of this contrast took place in the neo-Kantian philosophy, as for instance with the older Natorp and in the religious a priori of Troeltsch. The metaphysical contrast became a logical one or even a psychological one. Wobermin sought to remove the tension by the religio-psychological circle, which endeavors to unite the anthropocentric point of departure with the theocentric goal.

Barthian theology rejects even this union as anthropocentric. As a theology of transcendence it is much stronger, however, in its negative than in its positive statement. It can, furthermore, speak only in negation. Its position of pure transcendence could be given "positive" expression only through silence. It is enabled to speak of transcendence only because

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

this has been pierced by revelation. A theocentric theology is only possible on the presupposition of a communication of the divine by itself and can only have the meaning of reminding us that revelation is not the deed of man. Neither could there be a theocentric theology if we were dealing with an unknown God. But a God, who makes Himself known, somehow enters into man even though it be but through man's hearing Him. Even Barthian theology cannot surrender this middle position, despite the fact that it is more interested in combating the theology of immanence than in proving the possibility of a real theology of transcendence.

In this conflict it is prosecuting the case against idealism, in particular, with unrelenting enmity. It has, without a doubt, caused its over-estimation to become shaky. The "bubble of idealistic tradition" which has threatened for centuries to choke evangelical theology, has now been successfully punctured, as Schumann acknowledges. His criticism is, however, that it did not altogether get rid of idealism and is standing with one foot on the Gospel and the other on an idealistic philosophy of religion.<sup>22</sup> None the less, wide circles in theology have opened their eyes to the hidden antithesis between idealism and Gospel, to its last and most sublime claim to the authority of the human mind. This acknowledgment does not deny that the criticism of idealism contains many an exaggeration and injustice. Even Althaus defends at

<sup>22</sup> In *Gottesgedanke und der Zerfall der Moderne*, 1929.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

least its universality. The Barthians have become the true grave-diggers of idealism and have sought to defend the sovereignty and transcendence of God against their being devoured by immanence. They have done this partly from the basis of the Old Testament and partly from that of philosophy by means of the qualitative differentiation between time and eternity. If they have thus revolted against the "de-theizing" of theology, one must not necessarily accuse them of "de-humanizing" theology as Duhm does. For their true position is found neither in pure transcendence nor in immanence—no one can assume that position—but in revelation. It is from here that Brunner builds up his "Christology of the Barthian Theology," which is a decidedly more advantageous point of departure than Barth's doctrine of the trinity.

By this insistence upon theocentric theology—and this impression can hardly be denied—the theology of revelation has been recognized anew as the only possibility of a genuine Christian theology. It is now commonly seen that theology, which, on the anthropocentric basis had become enslaved to science, has thereby regained its freedom and is beginning to be emancipated from the modern spirit. The only question which remains, then, is whether revelation is really supposed to reveal or to veil. In the Barthian theology of revelation there is so much Reformed fear of the deification of the creature in revelation that even the transcendence of the appearance of

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

Christ is insisted upon. The over-emphasis of the religious motive of transcendence, of reverence before the unapproachable God, is widely understood by the present-day theology as not dealing altogether seriously with the fact of revelation. It shifts the center of the relationship of God and man, but God remains the one who alone acts. The Christian fact of revelation destroys the religio-philosophical contradiction of transcendence and immanence. The religious interest in the divinely transcendent character of revelation does not need to be guarded by a philosophical equation. The revealing God protects his self-communication against the human passion to humanize the divine by acting Himself—and He alone does this. A theocentric theology is possible only as a theology of revelation and this, as a matter of fact, is rapidly gaining recognition.

### *(γ) Is a system of Christian ethics possible?*

The possibility of a system of Christian ethics is called into question by the conception of the Gospel as the crisis of ethics. If Jesus in Himself represents the crisis even of the religious man, “no having and no doing is possible any longer on the part of man, but only waiting and hoping.” Ethics ends in eschatology and is devoured by it. Justification renders ethics superfluous. There is special emphasis on the fact that even the justified Christian does nothing by himself and is an “impious” man who is solely dependent upon grace. In the dispute be-

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

tween Gogarten and Hirsch "<sup>20</sup> the impossibility of a system of Christian ethics was clearly expressed. There is "only an act of faith pointing toward infinity."

This ethics of grace must enter into strongest opposition to an ethics of pure disposition or of the Kantian pure will, or to an ethics in the center of which there somehow stands the idea of the good. Gogarten more than any one else has produced with unusual severity this break with the ethical thought of tradition by proving every possibility of an absolute value of self as unevangelical, and seeing the will of God only in the keen struggle against the various existing Christian ideals.<sup>21</sup> While the ethics of the categorical imperative was formerly found in the Sermon on the Mount, it is today looked upon as the greatest enemy to the Pauline message of justification, i.e., as the enemy to the Gospel itself.

In the conflict about this position the rôles have been shifted in a peculiar fashion. This radical doctrine of justification and the rejection of ethics by the Barthian theology is really closer to Lutheranism, while the Lutheran Koeberle, on the other hand, in a manner quite un-Lutheran combines justification with ethical principles and requirements. Here the battle of liberating Christianity from bourgeois moralism is fought out radically to a finish. The first concern is with the doing of God and not of man. The

<sup>20</sup> *Zwischen den Zeiten*, 1923.

<sup>21</sup> *Religioese Aufgabe der Gegenwart*. *Leuchter* 9, 1930-31.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

work of man is of secondary importance and cannot be considered at all in his relationship to God. It does not appear until later, when we are dealing with the relation of man to the concrete reality of life. There Piper and, recently, Brunner <sup>81</sup> also see how the concrete situation must receive ethical consideration when viewed from a relation to God. These trends of thought go far to meet the previously mentioned ethical pessimism and consciousness of impotence, even though they have not been derived from it. The whole daring of an eschatological theology in the midst of a concrete world is realized in this struggle for the meaning and the possibility of a system of Christian ethics.

Barthian theology does not know anything of the possibility of an ethics as a human construction, as a possibility that has been gained from normatively determined inwardness, and it holds fast to the sole activity of God's revelation reaching even into the innermost heart. If this interest is acknowledged it is of little point whether one speaks of Christian ethics or of the "keeping of the commandments," so long as there is a real commandment and genuine doing. In this there is found far-reaching unanimity, provided that this attitude be guarded against the consequences of moral sloth as well as against chiliastic dreams which might lead to fantastic morals.

Emil Brunner took a less radical position in his

<sup>81</sup> Brunner, *Das Gebot und die Ordnungen*, Mohr, 1932.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

ethics,<sup>11a</sup> which was published after the appearance of the German edition of this book. The imperative and absolute character of the commandment of God remains as the one and unshakable basis of Christian ethics which is fundamentally opposed to every kind of eudemonist or idealistic conception. But being in this attitude of unrestricted obedience and guided by the Spirit, man has been allowed to discover certain *ordinationes*, certain fundamental laws or orders in family, State and society, enabling him in the midst of a fallen world to march tremblingly in the direction of the will of God.

The present state of discussion does not permit the final word to be spoken on these three questions. They were meant only to reveal the principal points around which a multitude of other problems are gathering. In meeting these questions it may also be observed how a re-orientation of the theological groups is taking place. In view of these problems, which permeate all groups and dissolve them from within, it is beside the point to ask about factions.

Since this book was written,<sup>11b</sup> Germany has been shaken by the revolution which has deeply affected her religious situation. The Hitler Government is out for a "totalitarian State" whose ideal is uniformity of political, social and religious life. The new state acknowledges the moral values of the church, and

<sup>11a</sup> *Das Gebot und die Ordnungen* 1932

<sup>11b</sup> Dr. Keller has added these paragraphs and a few others throughout the book to include recent developments.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

claims its collaboration in the effort to build up a new life for the nation. Hitler himself has promised to respect the liberty of the church, provided it does not interfere in political questions. In spite of this promise, an attempt has been made to impose on the church State-Commissioners who have already dissolved synods and other official agencies of the churches. Friedrich von Bodelschwingh, the newly elected Bishop of the German Church, into which the twenty-eight provincial churches are to be blended, had to withdraw, and several of the most prominent and intrepid church leaders, such as General-Superintendent Dibelius, Schian and Karow, were deposed. Most of the Christian youth organizations were put under government control. The Central Organization of Church Welfare Work and the Evangelical Press Service were placed under state supervision. The unifying will of the government is therefore felt not only in church administration but even in the spiritual life and thinking of the church and in its practical activities.

It is to be feared that this unifying influence may also seize the theological faculties of the German universities, which are state institutions.

The totalitarian state is therefore a great menace to the liberty of the Evangelical Church. This attack on the substance of the Evangelical Church is no longer merely a national German problem, but affects the whole situation of Continental Protestantism. Still greater than the administrative pressure

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

of this unifying state power is the spiritual danger coming from a Protestant group within the National-Socialists, the so-called "German Christians." Within this group we find, besides other tendencies, the doctrine of the purity and supremacy of Aryan blood and a race antagonism which has led to regrettable intolerance against the Jewish element and even against Christians of Jewish extraction. Even though the right of the government to readjust the proportion of Jews in public life is not disputed, the fact that an intellectual élite of Jewish blood and even a certain number of baptized Christian pastors of Jewish extraction are thrown into misery and ruin is deplored not only abroad, but by many Germans themselves, as being a non-Christian expression of race prejudice.

Even theological professors like Professor Hirsch, Fezer and an Evangelical Bishop like Rendtorff undertake the defence of the new nationalistic ideals. A Christian editor like Stapel goes so far as to find in the German nation an immanent divine law, a *nomos* which obliges all to develop manly and heroic virtues to the highest possible level and to prepare the way for the imperialism of the best nation. Some "German Christians" have even demanded the discarding of the Old Testament and refuse to join a church which retains it.

Other "German Christians," inspired by such men as Bergmann, Ludendorf, Wirth and others, are discovering the religious values of the old northern

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

German religion and are trying to combine its most heroic elements with the spirit of Christianity. The unifying spell of the present situation goes so far that the naïve hope was even expressed of combining the Evangelical and the Roman Catholic Churches into one United Christian Church of the German nation.

The truly evangelical Christians in Germany are fully aware of the spiritual danger resulting from the new race antagonism and this new nationalism. Various groups as, for instance, the triumvirate of President Kapler, Bishop Mahrarens and Dr. Hesse, charged with drafting the new constitution, the Reformed groups assembled at Rheydt, the Pastors' Assemblies of Altona, the "Young Reformed Group" and individual leaders like Dibelius, Karl Heim, Zöllner, Asmussen, Weinel and others, have fought bravely for the spiritual liberty of the church and the purity of Christian doctrine.

Nobody undertook this with greater intrepidity than Karl Barth himself. The Barthian theology appears, therefore, on the present battlefield, as a new and independent little army struggling with new weapons and a new spirit for the true nature and liberty of the Christian church in the midst of a people trying to build up a new national, political, social and religious philosophy. This struggle of the Barthian group is therefore a typical and most important aspect of the decisive controversy between a Christianity which is striving for synthesis between

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

the Gospel and the world and, on the other side, a small group strongly opposed to any attempt at permitting the Gospel to be tainted with worldly ends. While the excitement was at its height, in June, 1933, Karl Barth published an essay on "Our Present Theological Existence."<sup>11</sup> This outstanding document in the fight for or against Christ, is a cry of the Christian conscience in the midst of the darkness out of which the beast from the abyss is rising. Karl Barth says the only possibility for the Christian church at the present time is to stand firmly on the Word of God and not to care about anything else, not to participate in any well-meant endeavor to build up a new nation, a new church policy, a new social or legal organism. The church can keep its independence only in so far as it feels bound by the Word of God. "To announce it in the midst of the present turmoil and in the midst of the sinister influence of 'Powers and Principalities' is its only task; to seek God elsewhere than in His Word and to find His Word elsewhere than in Jesus Christ, and to seek Christ elsewhere than in the Old and New Testament is the great spiritual temptation through which the German Church is now passing."

Contrary to the "German Christians" who hail the new coöperation between state and church, Karl Barth rejects inexorably the ideals of the National-Socialists and the "German Christians." For the church to approve such occurrences as the singing in

<sup>11</sup> *Theologische Bauten heute*. Kaiser Verlag, Munich, 1933.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

a church of the great anthem of the Reformation, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," to the accompaniment of drums, would be a betrayal of the Gospel. He sees in theological reflection on the nature of the church the real remedy against such dangerous syncretism between the will of the world and the will of God.

Karl Barth is also strongly opposed to the election of a bishop as a responsible spiritual leader and guardian of the church, and stresses vehemently the necessity of clear theological thinking in this respect before any practical experimentation in church polity is made, which would merely be inspired by the desire to invest the church with power and leadership similar to that of the state. Karl Barth believes that the victory of the "German Christians" would mean the end of the Evangelical Church and that the church should prefer to go down to the catacombs rather than to make peace with their doctrine.

It is still doubtful whether the party in power and the "German Christians" can stand the vehement and outspoken language of such an upright theologian. But Barth and his theology are certainly rendering a great spiritual service to the German Church in setting forth the following principles of a true Evangelical Church and thus opposing any adulteration of its nature and its task:

The task of the church does not consist in opening the way to the German people toward a new national church, but in preaching the Gospel in the midst of this nation.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

The church has not to serve men or the German people, but is the church for the German evangelical people and serves the Word of God and does not hear the voice of a stranger.

The church preaches the Gospel in the new State but not under it and not in its spirit.

The church must remain independent of any political or social theories.

The community of the church is not formed by blood or by race but by the Holy Spirit and by baptism. It would cease to be a Christian church if it excluded the Jewish Christians.

Barth complains of the fascination under which men and pastors and theologians have accepted the new nationalistic doctrine. It is not yet quite certain whether this amount of free speech and criticism will be allowed under the new régime and whether Karl Barth will not have to go back to Switzerland, to his home country. His criticism not only aims at the "German Christians," but also at the *Jungreformatorische Bewegung*, which identifies too easily present ideals of a new church policy with the ideals of an awakening nation and without sufficient theological reflexion. Karl Barth is not afraid of all these menaces from without, because the inner life of the church under its spiritual Lord is independent of well-being or policy or victory, and God's help is at the present time the only real help which the German Church needs. The future of the German Evangelical Church does not lie in a great national

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

religious power nor in unity nor in ecclesiastical wisdom, but in the presence of the Spirit, in the true following of Christ who bore the cross and in that unbroken courage and independence which is a gift of the Spirit. To keep this faith alive is the task of the theologian "who sits as a lonely bird on the roof, upon the earth therefore, but nevertheless under God's wide open heaven."

The new statement of Barth concerning present conditions is calling forth the vehement reaction of the "German Christians," who consider it one of their most important tasks to break the influence which Barth has on the younger generation. They share his teaching on repentance, but rebuke his theology of the Transcendent God, giving no solution to practical life problems as defeatism and as a theology of catastrophes. They accuse him of isolating the Church within the cultural life of the time, of opposing religion to culture and of neglecting the necessary struggle against an atheistic Bolshevism. His internationalism is suspected as being opposed to their interpretation of the nation, nature, and the fatherland as divine means through which God speaks to the present generation.

## SCANDINAVIA

The Scandinavian North appears to be the most uniform ecclesiastical territory of World Protestantism. In Denmark as well as in Sweden, in Norway and also in Finland, the entire nation is historically

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

united into one Lutheran state and national church without any of the more pronounced confessional differences which are a problem in other churches. In Finland ninety-nine per cent of the population are Lutheran. Even though the number of the unchurched has increased considerably in the Scandinavian countries, particularly in Sweden, confessional uniformity is so much a part of the traditional consciousness of the people that, for instance, a Roman Catholic or even a Methodist or Baptist mission may easily be regarded as a violation of the religious character of the country.

To this must be added that the three Scandinavian countries, in spite of minor differences, possess the same basic language and are therefore able to use the same literature.

Noticeable differences in the church life of the three countries may be observed, however. This becomes evident from the mere reference to the "church" of Sweden, the "congregations" of Denmark, and the Norwegian "Christians." In these designations there lies more than a difference in organization. The church of Sweden is first of all characterized as a state church. The state possesses authority over the church, even though it does not use it, and the church enjoys the right of veto against the state without, however, usually applying it. Both live in a singular symbiosis which may neither be designated as an oppressive state church nor as a church state. There is also contained in it the basic recogni-

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

tion of the state by the church as a God-given order of society and, on the other hand, the recognition by the state that spiritual and moral forces are necessary for the building of a nation.

Although the state church as such still exists in Denmark, it is disintegrating and the center of gravity is being transferred to the congregation. The little congregation has become the very center of church life.<sup>11</sup> The large congregations have been divided. These little congregations have assumed a missionary task and have become centers for the spiritual awakening of the people. In Grundtvigianism the congregation has been recognized as a means of influencing all of the people, in contra-distinction to the "Group Movement" where the influence is limited to small groups of the converted.

Norway (as Professor Lyder Brun puts it) is the land and the church of the individualist. The weaker interest in association is probably due to the infinite scattering of a small population over an extensive country, which forces man into isolation. But it is also due to the pietistic evangelistic movement, which puts personal Christianity into the foreground over against the idea of church and congregation.

In spite of these differences, a uniform atmosphere of Lutheranism hangs over the Scandinavian North. It is split in Norway into an orthodox and a liberal group—a contrast which means very little in Den-

<sup>11</sup> Compare Ed. Geismar, in the *Oekumenische Briefe*, 1, 1931, published by Hinderer.—*Student World*, 1930.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

mark, and which shows still other characteristics in Sweden and also in Finland. The inner religious contrast in the three Scandinavian countries takes its course differently in each place. In Norway evangelistic piety and liberalism are facing each other; in Denmark Grundtvigianism <sup>\*\*</sup> and "Home Missions"; lately, in Sweden, a socially orientated Free Church movement may be contrasted with the High Church of the state. But neither the pietism of Norway, nor the Grundtvigianism of Denmark, nor the High Church endeavors in Sweden were able to retard the pronounced unchurhing of the broad masses, at least in the larger cities. This is signally reflected in the Nordic literature. Popular sentiment, especially in Copenhagen, and primarily among the laboring classes and among the elite of the educated, was opposed to the church.

. . . . .

How does it happen, however, that Barthianism affects these three countries so differently? <sup>\*\*</sup> While it made a tremendous advance into the church life of Denmark, the Norwegian and Swedish church world have hardly been shaken by it and only in theological circles have they taken objective notice of it. While these two countries are facing it dispassionately, and in part simply assume an attitude of waiting, there is

<sup>\*\*</sup> Grundtvig held views similar to those of the early Oxford Tractarians and was their contemporary. (Translator.)

<sup>\*\*</sup> Torsten Bohlin, *Glaube und Offenbarung*, 1928.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

in Denmark a genuine, young “shock troop” army, which is now assuming the offensive.

(a) In Sweden the Barthian theology meets with a satisfied Lutheranism which can probably offer greater resistance because it did not need to rediscover certain original phases of Luther as German theology did. It is found in a modern liberal form, in a ritualistic movement and as a pietistic communion, which was formerly influenced by Schartau, and is today permeated by free church and social inclinations. In discussions with Swedish theologians one hears again and again the rejection of the Barthian criticism, because they affirm that the need for it is not so great, since they never lost sight of those ultimate questions to which Barthianism was again calling attention. A Lutheranism, in which the real questions of Luther have remained alive, appears to be a degree of protection against the similar questions by Barth, and likewise also against Calvin, who, for example, is mentioned only in one footnote in Aulen’s work on the Christian idea of God. They see the acme of Christian thought in the Lutheran appreciation of the Gospel.<sup>84</sup> It combines the majesty and the love of God and therefore decisively rejects the Barthian distrust of the message of love. This Lutheranism considers itself secure in content as well as in form. It stands firmly upon the Lutheran doctrine of justification as the material principle of the Reformation

<sup>84</sup> According to a discussion by Albertz in the *Reformierte Kirchenzeitung*, 1930.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

and does not believe that it has been brought to any new insight by the Barthian theology. It also uses the old ecclesiastical forms freely, without holding them to be so essential as the Anglicans do. Under the leadership of Billing, Soederblom,<sup>22</sup> Aulen and Runestam it has preserved a recognition of the revelatory and the theocentric nature of Christianity,<sup>23</sup> and in spite of critical trends of thought and the great influence of Herrmann, it has (this is especially true of Soederblom) never sacrificed the category of the religious for the sake of ethics. Even the idea of the church<sup>24</sup> has never been lost by Swedish Lutheranism, with its intimate union of theology and church, and it is now quickened anew by the youth-church movement under the leadership of Aulen. For these reasons the Barthian movement has so far been unable to take root, even though it is received with a friendly interest which has led to an invitation to Brunner to come to Upsala.

(b) In Norway an experiential piety has been fostered by both the ecclesiastical individualism and the revivalist movement which offered individual Christians a strong, personal, religious life and insured them against influences from the outside. Seclusion has always awakened the inner life. Profound experiences of the mind possess an independent in-

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Bring in *Zeitschrift fuer Systematische Theologie*, 4, 1930, 31—Also Torsten Bohlin, *Gottesglaube und Christenglaube*, 1927.

<sup>23</sup> *Festschrift fuer Thoren—To whom shall we go?* Geneva, 1931.

<sup>24</sup> *Theology*, October 1928.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

tegrity which is hard to shake from the outside, especially if they have been nourished by the Bible and carried along in the stream of a revival movement. This is evident in Norway also by the fact that liberal theology, and historic-critical science, are invading this circle only with difficulty and meet with passionate resistance. The tension between the conservative, "revival" Christians and liberalism is unusually strong.

A theology, which from the very start surrenders the Bible to historical criticism and on the other hand accuses experience and the assurance of faith of being humanism and dangerous self-deception, has therefore no chance for a sympathetic reception. To this must be added the fact that the religious consciousness of the Norwegian is reminded daily of the majesty of God by the prevailing solitude and by the grandeur of his native landscape. The strong emphasis upon the sovereignty of God does not, therefore, appear as anything new to him but as self-evident, as do also the orthodox elements of the new theology, while its criticism and its doctrine of transcendence is rejected as one-sided.

(c) If one may not speak of an appreciable influence of the Barthian theology on Sweden and Norway and certainly not of an invasion of their church life, Denmark has, on the other hand, been gripped by so strong a Barthian wave that it has caused a split in the Student Christian Movement.

Even though one does not claim to be able to ex-

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

plain such a phenomenon completely, one feels induced to seek after the causes of this effect.

Danish church life is decisively determined, on the one hand, by Grundtvigianism,<sup>\*\*</sup> which was less of a theologically orientated trend than a popular movement or a congregational movement with a strong faith in the immanent possibilities of national piety, in ecclesiastical and political democracy, and was originally also a rejection of nationalism. On the other hand, it is determined by a Home Mission Movement, to be distinguished from the German idea of Home Missions which represents a revival type of Christianity. If Grundtvigianism became a religious attitude with a strong secularization of the original, anti-rationalistic features, even revivalistic Christianity could not, on the other hand, conquer the strong, anti-Christian attitude of the masses, especially of the urban middle classes and their literary and journalistic leaders, in spite of their organization of numerous small mission congregations. The bourgeoisie appear to be largely de-Christianized, or at least completely unchurched, and so are the laboring classes, despite the church social work done by individual pastors. A chasm has thereby been opened between church and people, which represents a condition of tension, i.e., a restlessness and elasticity of movement.

Such a relation of tenseness, such a decline which somehow betrays uncertainty, dissatisfaction with

<sup>\*\*</sup> Cf. Joergensen, *Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 10, 36.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

existing conditions, a longing and an inner conscious or unconscious distress, at least the blasting of old, assured ways of living, necessarily provided an advantageous situation for the invasion of a new theology, which endeavors in a new way to lay hold of the entire religious problem of the people, which had previously defied solution.

To this must be added the question to what extent Kierkegaard, who was one of the church fathers of this movement, has been its spiritual forerunner in Denmark. It is true, of course, that Kierkegaard did not make his greatest impression in Denmark, at least not during his lifetime. The study of Kierkegaard did not experience a renaissance until a considerable time afterwards, especially through Professor Geismar, whose book on Kierkegaard has been translated into German. Wherever Kierkegaard is understood, opposition is aroused to organized ecclesiasticism, to the objective treatment of religious questions, to the sovereignty of man, whether it be called idealism or a theology of mystical experience. In this Kierkegaard circle of young pastors and pupils of Geismar there arose not only resistance against the teacher himself, whom they accused of failing to present Kierkegaard's ideas as sufficiently radical, but also against the prevalent work of the church as such. The work with youth, the work of Home Missions appears as superficial church business. In Grundtvigianism they frequently saw secularized piety, which had gone over to a concern with all sorts of cultural pos-

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

sessions. The majesty of God seemed to have been preserved too little and the institutions of the church seemed to have taken over the meaning of the existential meeting with the transcendent God. In this opposition to the prevalent church life the thoughts of Kierkegaard have certainly remained alive. However, they became effective only when their reinforced echo from foreign lands reached Denmark. This effect was more marked when Barthianism became known.

Into this group of dissatisfied, excited radicals Barthian thought penetrated with full force. The inward distress, the tension and the preparation of Kierkegaard made them receptive to the new. A magazine entitled the *Tidenværv* (*The Turn of the Times*), has been their journal since 1926. Especially the Student Christian Movement became the port of invasion for the new thoughts. By this invasion it has been split completely into two camps which vehemently attack each other. Indictment was launched against the old theology. The quiet work of the church was scorned as secularization of the message or as emotional smugness, which had found a place in Home Missions despite all its call to repentance. It was only too evident that Grundtvigianism had in part verily been transformed into a work of national culture and democratic politics. They uncovered an all-too-human treatment of the entire religious question even within the youth movement; they criticized the too-great intimacy

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

with *dem lieben Gott*; they demanded a new and serious realization of the transcendence of God, a new appreciation of the reality of God in place of emotionalism and an opportunistic illusionary piety.

This preparedness for the message of the Barthian theology, which was produced by the after-effects of Kierkegaard, was considerably enhanced by direct contact. Denmark lies closest to Germany. Bultmann came over frequently; his book on Jesus was translated into Danish. Thurneysen gave a lecture in 1925 which then developed into his book on Blumhardt. Barth and Brunner were invited, the Barthian writings were studied eagerly. Thus a movement came about within a small, but active group, causing the Danish church much trouble by its irreverent criticism of everything, which was in part even keener than in Germany. Geismar even says that the quiet work which followed the revival movement has been destroyed. But the disturbance of all ecclesiastical complacency is the very purpose of this movement.

Among the thought-treasures of Barthian theology, the transcendence of God proved especially effective; it disturbs all emotional bliss and intimacy and simply demands submission to the Word.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the attack upon every form of idealism, which was railed at as falsehood to the essential; the demand "to remain faithful to the earth," since we do not get beyond the limitations of the flesh even

<sup>11</sup> According to information by Bishop Ammundsen.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

in the Christian life, and the pointing to grace, which replaces all human experience and is the end of the institution, were also emphasized.

The counter criticism <sup>40</sup> has begun first of all with an investigation of the concept of the Word of God. The play of color in this concept has been pointed out. In one way it appears almost identical with the Scriptures and is then, inasmuch as it is history, almost disintegrated by criticism, by Bultmann, for instance. Man thereby sets himself up as judge over that which is God's Word. Professor Torn therefore criticizes primarily the Barthian exegesis, which he regards as subjectively and dogmatically biased. It is also objected that Christ Himself and His glad tidings are made to recede so markedly behind the proclamation of judgment. He is not presented as the creator of new life, Who, to be sure, is Himself judgment upon all sorts of human torpidity and sin, but as the Creator of new possibilities of life which we must develop ethically and religiously. The neglect of ethics is similarly combatted.

Since the conflict in Denmark bears more of a practical religious than an especially theological character, the differences between Lutheranism and the Reformed Church are not so strongly realized. Nevertheless, it is pointed out in this pronouncedly Lutheran country that an approach to the Calvinistic

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Nordenstoft, *Dansk Kirkeliv*, Gads Verlag, Copenhagen, 1930.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

concept of God takes place with the strong emphasis on Luther's *De servo arbitrio*, and that the sacraments would be neglected.

The movement appeared, therefore, as much a reaction of a younger group against the prevalent church life, as an independent continuation of the stimulation by Kierkegaard, which was given a new impetus by the Barthian theology. The necessity of a correction can hardly be denied. The attempt is made today, however, to establish just what results the movement has produced "<sup>1</sup> after deducting everything tumultuous, all critical conceitedness and lack of respect. It is too early to discuss this, however, for in spite of a recent volume of sermons "<sup>2</sup> the movement has not as yet entered lay circles and the congregations.

Karl Barth has visited Denmark recently and discovered to his horror what the Barthians there had made of him. He refused to be used simply as a criticism of the church by a group of young and negative thinking minds, and emphasized afresh in this Lutheran country the positive and constructive principles of his theology. After his visit it became evident that Barth himself was more moderate and cautious than certain of his followers, and that the difference between Barth and the Barthians must never be forgotten.

<sup>1</sup> Von Loe in the magazine *Kirken*.

<sup>2</sup> *Livet Tro*. Copenhagen, 1930.

### HOLLAND

Until recently Holland represented the most divided Protestantism of Europe. This is not only due to its historical development but also to the strong emphasis upon theology and creed in this church. The theological development of the dogmatical basis has been so extensive and has in part been fixed so firmly in the dogma of the church, that dividing walls seem to have been erected once and for all which are very difficult to reduce and practically impossible to scale. Hollanders themselves talk, therefore, about the danger of emptying church life of theology, and so rendering difficult mutual understanding and coöperation in the very age of Stockholm. A blunt dogmatic position naturally invites a counter-movement. The dogmatic differentiation of the various viewpoints seems to have reached here a definite conclusion. A common movement has been made possible only very recently by an outside stimulus, that is, by the suggestions which have come to the various national churches from the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches, The Presbyterian Alliance and from the Ecumenical Council for Life and Work, which led to the organization of a church federation. This first federation has not been able so far, however, to include all the churches.

For this reason the church in Holland <sup>“</sup> has been

<sup>“</sup> Siegmund-Schultze, *Kirchen der Niederlande*.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

strongly polarized. Over against the pole of extreme confessional theology and ecclesiasticism of Holland there is found a counter-pole in the radical tendencies of Dutch theologians of the last generation, who have exerted a destructive influence especially in the field of Bible criticism. Such a counter-pole is also found in a non-churchly, anti-dogmatic tendency of the cultured Dutch middle classes, which have largely given up the church or have fallen prey to a more liberal and subjective grouping, in which all sorts of tendencies, even theosophical and anthroposophical, are found.

The tendency toward differentiation and intolerance, which characterizes a part of the church life of Holland, has led to the formation of a considerable number of mutually exclusive national churches. These churches have usually crystallized around a sharply outlined dogmatical position.

We are here less concerned with the characterization of the individual churches than with the spiritual attitudes and the theological conceptions that are penetrating into various churches and are important for our discussion.

In the first place we mention the integral Calvinism, which is found in the *Gereformeerde Kerk* and also in the right wing of the *Hervormde Kerk*. This is a Calvinistic orthodoxy, which lays all stress upon the Reformed doctrine and is not even dismayed by such extremes as were laid down by the Synod of Dort. With this is combined that genuine Calvinistic

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

dynamic which seeks to translate the inexorable demand of a majestic God into action and life by means of the energy derived from a determined obedience. We may observe the character-forming power of this spiritual determination in Holland just as well as in Scotland. But we also find the same inclination toward the Old Testament and toward legalism. Doctrine also is law to which the individual must subject himself. The case of Geelkerken has demonstrated sufficiently how far this doctrinal legalism involves the innermost conviction of the individual. The very achievements of the *Gereformeerde Kerk*, on the other hand, as, for example, the free University at Amsterdam, prove the extent of the willingness to sacrifice and the conscious surrender to which such a strong dogmatic position trains the church.

Even where this Calvinism is not professed in such blunt form as in the *Gereformeerde Kerk*, it is this attitude which determines the consciousness of the Calvinistic church folk. In all the churches influenced by Calvinism there are found submission to the sovereignty of God and the doctrine of predestination; stress also is laid on the idea of the congregation, church discipline and ethical energy, and the contrast to Roman Catholic ways will be observed, in a pronounced or more moderate form, as postulate or as churchly reality.

Even in latitudinarian and modern-Protestant circles the need of religious determination, of definite contours, authority and inner obligation is making it-

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

self felt today. This is true especially in the face of Roman Catholicism, which engages in lively recruiting and proves by its very gains that the demand of inner commitment meets with a real desire of the soul.

Determined and integral Calvinism has become the natural port of entry for the Barthian theology. Wherever it is in control people understand at once what Barthianism is driving at with its submission to the Word of God, the emphasis upon the sovereignty of God, the depreciation of man, its combatting of all apotheosis of the creature, and its sobriety.

In this present-day Calvinism “ a marked tendency toward criticism of all culture is gaining hold. The church is viewed in the light of eternity and is thus placed over against all relative cultural values, even those of historical appreciation and Bible criticism. This adds a powerful new appeal to the principal questions of systematic theology and has brought about a sort of Copernican turning point in theology, which now views its questions less from the historicocritical, psychological-practical point of view than from a theocentric point of view. Viewing things *sub specie aeternitatis* and viewing them from their human interest have again become pronounced opposites.

Besides this given starting-point there must also be mentioned the strong personal relation which links

“ According to information received from Professor Aalders.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

Barthianism with Holland. The movement profited by the sympathetic interest which Professor Haitjema, "one of the most respected Dutch theological leaders, showed toward the movement from the point of view of Dutch neo-Calvinism.

He possesses the confidence of the so-called "confessionals" in his church and enjoys the personal sympathy of all orthodox circles, being chairman of the organization for the reëstablishment of the former confessional status. In conjunction with the Reverend Te Winkel he is publishing an important magazine, *Onser aigen Vaandel*, which serves these purposes. It was to be expected that Kohlbruegge, who had also studied in Holland and at the Lower Rhine, and who was well known, had long prepared Holland for an appreciation of the new theology, with his insistence upon the revelation of the Word and the emphasis upon the impotent sinful nature of man. Students and friends of his theology are eagerly endeavoring to point out the integral, Calvinistic orthodoxy in Karl Barth and to suffer the explosive elements in this theology for the sake of that content, or to interpret them in an orthodox-Calvinistic way.

To these mediators of Barthian theology belongs also Dr. Visser 't Hooft "in Geneva, a truly international apostle of the Barthian theology. He is try-

<sup>48</sup> Haitjema, *Karl Barths kritische Theologie*, 1926, and *Zwischen den Zeiten*, 4, 1931.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. also his important writing *The Background of the Social Gospel in America*, Haarlem (Oxford University Press).

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

ing to awaken an understanding of it as quickly as possible in Western Switzerland, in Great Britain and in America, because he recognizes that spiritual movements must become known in other lands at the time of their most vigorous functioning.

In addition, Barth and Brunner have been called to Holland repeatedly. The sale of Brunner's books is considerable in Holland. Brunner has also been translated into Dutch. In several universities Barthian study circles have been formed which are taking up the new theology. It is rumored, however, that this interest has already passed its zenith.

How does the traditional Calvinism take this neo-Calvinism? It is primarily the attitude to the Word of God as the sole authority of our religious life which attracts Dutch Biblicalism. There is no place for human authorities in Calvinism. This accounts for the absence of bishops, ecclesiastical tutelage, political or learned "pillars." This Calvinistic lack of respect for everything human is only the reverse of their respect for God. The democratic nature of Calvinism and of the character of the people it has created, as was theoretically shown by Jurieu and Hotman, tolerates as sole authority only the Divine Word. In the Barthian doctrine of the Word of God the Dutch theologian meets such a recognized authority, which is not interpreted supra-naturalistically in the old sense and yet which combines the revelatory character

of the Word with an inevitable critical understanding of the Bible. Especially those who have rejected the old supra-naturalism as a kind of scholasticism, discover in the theology of the Word a liberating dialectic, which allows to criticism its relative justification and also recognizes the authority which cannot be met by criticism. Haitjema's book demonstrates how Dutch theology, like the German, comes to a critical and comprehending understanding of Barthian theology with that intellectual independence, which is not interested in pious repetition or scholastic wisdom or strengthening the power of one's own faction, but solely in the truth.

The critics discuss the hidden problems and consequences of the new theology sympathetically. The objections come either from the extreme right or the extreme left. Criticism is exercised primarily by the most conservative theology of the *Gereformeerde Kerk*. The case of Geelkerken has demonstrated to the whole world how strongly this theology is interested in an ontological understanding of the inspired Bible. Even in the Old Testament it is not only concerned with an historical religious experience or with a symbolic-fideistic interpretation, or symbolic or pneumatological exposition, but with the metaphysics of the divine Word. Behind every letter of the Bible there stands a massive "*est.*" The serpent actually spoke Hebrew in Paradise. This biblical realism must protest, although not in an unfriendly way, against what has been called the irrationalism of Karl Barth,

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

the hidden God Who, even in the Bible,<sup>47</sup> shows a veiled countenance.

An irrational God cannot satisfy the intellectualistic demands of this Calvinism which cannot avoid seeing in it the rank growth of an atheoretical theology, a softening of the ontological metaphysics. "Faith in revelation must be scientific." But it should be metaphysical as well. They do not tolerate a division of revelation and metaphysics<sup>48</sup> and for Kantianism they substitute a Christian, epistemological Realism. From this angle they also investigate the philosophical past of Karl Barth<sup>49</sup> and discuss it critically. Dutch Fundamentalism is therefore interested in the emphasis upon biblical truths not in a dogmatical sense alone, but also metaphysically, and thereby shows up the contrast between the ontological and the existential point of view.

In conservative Calvinistic circles the paradox of this theology is also criticized, a paradox which is evident in the contrast between the much emphasized sovereignty of God and the depreciation of His creation, between its dogmatic conservatism and its Bible criticism, between the transcendence of God and the identification of His Word with the human word of the preacher.

<sup>47</sup> I owe this point to Dr. van der Vaart Smit, Zwijndrecht.—Dr. L. van der Zanden, *Christelijke Religie an histor Openbaring*, 1928.—Dr. E. D. Kran, *Openbaring a Mysteri*, 1929.—Pastor van Hoeck, *Karl Barth*.

<sup>48</sup> Hartog, *De Logosgedanke in Johannes-Evangelium*.

<sup>49</sup> Van der Vaart, *Karl Barth und die Marburger Schule, Kantstudien*, 1922.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

There are, of course, more profound reasons also for the fact that this theology has gained less admission into the strict *Gereformeerde Kerk* than into the dogmatically less severe *Hervormde Kerk*, which through this theology is retrieving its character from latitudinarian and modernistic tendencies and the weakening of its Calvinistic heritage. It is equally clear that the younger theologians are more receptive to it than the older generation.

Barthian theology must therefore defend itself on two fronts. From the right there comes a solid theology with its faith in the letter, and from the left comes an extreme liberalism. In the broad center, however, it has probably met with a more appreciative judgment than anywhere else in foreign countries, as for instance by Roessing, Windisch and Aalders who, in their sympathetic discussion, reserve to themselves all critical freedom and yet realize and appreciate the great, old religious values, which are the real concern of this discussion. They attribute less importance to the specific dogmatic formulations of this rapidly changing theology than to that which will remain after the critical storms have passed over it.

It is not only a traditional Calvinism, however, which discusses neo-Calvinism sympathetically. There is also the culture-weariness of a highly cultured class. With all its possession of culture it no longer believes in its power to renew the world and therefore listens curiously or with genuine interest to

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

the new message from a transcendent world, before which, during recent years, the hollow values of civilization have faded away with such alarming suddenness.

### FRANCE AND LATIN PROTESTANTISM

It may seem surprising that the Barthian theology has hitherto hardly gained admission into the territory of the French language, even though it is the birthplace of Calvinism and should have an especial understanding of the essentially Calvinistic elements of this theology. It has, as a matter of fact, hardly become known in France, even though a series of articles sought to introduce it, as for instance in 1928 in *Christianisme Social*, by the author of this book; in the magazine of the theological faculty of Montpellier, by Dr. Visser 't Hooft, and also in the *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuse*.<sup>50</sup>

With the exception of a very few churchmen, western French-speaking Switzerland has not been able to enter into a closer relationship with this theology and has even rejected it emphatically. The reasons for this rejection are found primarily in the mental attitude of French and West-Swiss Protestantism. French Protestantism represents the most heroic form of the Continental Reformation, next to the Scottish and the Hungarian. If one visits the prison of the Huguenot women in the Tour de Constance in Aigues-Mortes and there reads the exhort-

<sup>50</sup> July-August 1926.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

tation of Marie Durand: "*Resistez!*" one can comprehend with this one word the spirit of French Protestantism. It has always remained on the defensive and this has left an imprint upon its psychology and its mental attitude. The group had to defend itself against the armies of the king and of Richelieu, against the cruel attempts to lead them astray during the dragonnades, and against the galleys. The character of the movement was determined during the time of persecution and thus it became a united, exclusive family which erected a sort of protective fence about itself. In this process it gained a spiritual culture which served as a substitute for official influence, a knowledge of an inner world which is not too dearly paid for even with suffering, a spirit of pastoral care and missions which is facing almost impossible tasks in a country which is either ultr clerical or anti-clerical. Persecution has also preserved French Protestantism against the danger of becoming the victim of an external institutionalism or state ecclesiasticism. It has always had a knowledge of the spiritual life. Even today it is on the defensive, and though its defensive does not take the form of armed resistance, it is nevertheless active through its literature, its apologetics, its educational institutions, its ethos.

French Protestantism is a small minority numbering barely a million. It finds itself in opposition to a vast number of Roman Catholics and of non-religious people. It must therefore battle against clericalism

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

and also against anti-clericalism, against modern secularism and paganism, as well as against the destructive and dispersive tendency which threatens it in the interior of France through the present shifting of the population. Of the forty million inhabitants of France no more than about eleven million adhere to the Roman Catholic Church, according to Roman Catholic figures. And where are the twenty-eight million others? They constitute a heavy burden of indifference, ignorance and enmity for the Catholic as well as for the Protestant Church, and for both simultaneously a missionary task which can hardly be accomplished.

The rise of liberal theology and Bible criticism divided French Protestantism into several churches, which only began to unite again under the pressure of the war, and which discovered in the French Church Federation a basis for new contacts and coöperation without thereby surrendering their character. Its spiritual character is, on the one hand, an orthodox Calvinism, especially in southern France, with centers in Nîmes and in the faculty of Montpellier, marked by an anxious historical faithfulness which is only softened by the warm and emotional enthusiasm of a Revival Christianity, as it is thriving at present in the Drôme. On the other hand, it is an evangelical-liberal Protestantism, which took part in the theological vibrations of the critical German theology as it was mediated especially by the Strasbourg school but mitigated by distance. Calvinism in the

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

former sense is no longer tolerated here. The God of Calvin terrifies Wilfred Monod.<sup>51</sup> The "theologians of the Absolute" hide Christ from him. But still he talks about the alibi of God, the Unknown, who, however, cannot dispense with our coöperation. In spite of the symbolo-fideism one can hardly talk about an idiosyncratic French theology. It either remained old-Calvinistic with modern tendencies, or it yielded to the influences of the critical theology, only much more cautiously than in Germany.

If now this old or new Calvinism does not open its doors to Barthianism, one reason is pure ignorance due to language. French Protestantism is being continually accused by nationalism and Catholicism of being foreign to the life of France, and must therefore guard itself against yielding to foreign thoughts, especially such as have come from Germany. It is not free from nationalistic considerations. But even if the Barthian theology were better known, there would be more profound reasons for its rejection. The Frenchman is an incorrigible rationalist. Descartes is part of his mental make-up. Irrationalism in any form is foreign to him. The very aptitude of the French mind for a clever antithesis makes the paradox of Barthian theology more incomprehensible to them. The French antithesis is more æsthetic than metaphysical and is therefore not suited to an expression of a deeper, irrational, inner disruption. Wherever

<sup>51</sup> Monod in the *Evangile et Liberté*, 18 Mar. 1931, and in a (unpublished) work on the Evangelical Theodicy.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

the unity of the spirit is threatened by a dualistic philosophy, it sees only darkness and Germanic obscuration. The French spirit loves the analysis of the given or the construction of a definite task, but not the leap into the dark or being suspended over seven thousand fathoms' depth. Not that it does not feel the present crisis, but to the French mind it is more a crisis of situation and not of existence, of economics, politics, civilization, the given form of intellectual life, but not of the very existence itself. This question the Frenchman still answers essentially with the *cogito ergo sum*. The analytical spirit, which brings about quick solutions, does not permit a difficult problem to swing threateningly over one's head like a sword.

To the old Calvinism, Barthianism, as seen from a distance, seems a critical danger. To the new, it appears a scholastic abstraction, a rechristianization of the old orthodoxy. To the symbolo-fideism it appears too much attached to the *croyance*, the formula of faith, and not permeated enough by the power of faith as trust.

Social Christianity, as Elie Gounelle and André Philip represent it, sees an anti-humanism at work in the Barthian theology, whose God is "unevangeli-cal" and "not human."

Gounelle seeks rather a "Christian Humanism," a "God-man solidarity" in the sense of a mutual condition of the divine act of restoration and man's act of assimilation. This synergism extends even to the

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

*conception coopérative de la conversion et de la Foi*, and he unhesitatingly offers as formula for the way of salvation: "divine, because human, human because divine." The formulæ are being chosen in conscious protest to the Barthian theology, which is rejected as arbitrary, pessimistic and anti-humanistic.<sup>11</sup>

Beginnings of an understanding are found in that "frenetic" Protestantism of the Brigade de la Drôme, whose young theologians Cadier and Dallière, with others close to them, like Lecerf or the Genevan, De Saussure, would restore an integral Calvinism.<sup>12</sup> Their criticism is directed as much against the liberalism of the Parisian theology as against the religious socialism of an André Philip, as being too optimistic, and against that of Gounelle, as being too humanistic, as also against the whole ecclesiasticism, as being too closely allied with a system. It would return to revelation, conversion, pessimistic seriousness, apostolic surrender, i.e., to an existential meeting, to the Absolute, to a theocentric theology.

"We must again take up the stern message of a religion, which no longer has man as its end; his little salvation, his little place in heaven, but seeks it in God at the price of the bitterest deprivation if need be." Barth himself could have written that.<sup>13</sup> This movement is too enthusiastic, too *réveil-like*, too

<sup>11</sup> Thus again and again in the *Christianisme Social*, 1930/31.

<sup>12</sup> De Saussure, *A l'École de Calvin Labor*, 1931.

<sup>13</sup> Cadier, *Doctrine du Réveil*, 1929.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

tumultuous to exert a deeper influence upon the entire church life. Every one observes remarkable parallels here, however, to the anguish and the inspiration out of which Barthianism arose.

For the present, the Protestantism of Western Switzerland has undertaken the real intellectual combat into which French Protestantism has not as yet entered.<sup>66</sup> In many ways it is in such close relationship, however, that the same line of battle will develop in France when the conflict arises there.

French Switzerland hardly knows the old integral Calvinism any longer. The endeavors to revive it, as Lecerf is making them in France and De Saussure in Geneva, have not as yet found a strong echo in the consciousness of the church.<sup>67</sup> The whole theology of Western Switzerland is in its left wing influenced by the Strasbourg school, while the right and center are dominated by the after-effects of the "experience-theology" of Gaston Frommel and Fulliquet, and especially by the lasting influence of Vinet, as well as by the psychology of religion in the school of Cæsar Malan, as Flournoy particularly and now Berguer, the latter under psychoanalytical influence, foster it. At each of the three faculties of Western Switzerland the attack on Barthian theology has begun; in Geneva by Lemaître,<sup>68</sup> in Lausanne by Bridel and in Neu-châtel by Neeser. The *Revue de Théologie et de*

<sup>66</sup> Cf. however, Scherding, "la théologie de K. Barth," *Rev. d'histoire et de philosophie religieuse*, July-August 1926.

<sup>67</sup> De Saussure, *A l'École de Calvin*, 1931.

<sup>68</sup> *Evangile et la théologie du Dieu lointain*, 1929.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

*Philosophie*<sup>\*\*</sup> has devoted an entire issue to this dispute.

The Barthian theology is here taken to be primarily an exaggerated reaction against an historicism and a liberalism which they are combating themselves. Bridel, on the other hand, radically rejects the following features: first, the separation of revelation from history; second, the denial of any preparation of salvation in the ethical condition of the individual, i.e., the opposition of nature and grace (this really almost gives approval to the Roman Catholic idea: *gratia non tellit naturam sed reparat et perficit*); third, the emphatic weakening of the humanity of Jesus for the sake of his divinity, whereby Docetism is brought dangerously close and the humanity appears only as a veil; and finally, the neglect of ethics, especially of a definite suggestion as to how the transition from grace to the new life takes place.<sup>\*\*</sup> Altogether French is, of course, the rejection of Irrationalism, since it is unthinkable to French Rationalism that God could not be thought. The depreciation of religious history is also criticized. This criticism cannot see anything else in the paradoxical form of the Barthians than a sinning against the *sublime bon sens de l'Evangile*.

Lemaître and Neeser are even more harsh in their rejection. The former sees in Barth a *penseur ger-*

<sup>\*\*</sup> No. 74, 1930.

<sup>\*\*</sup> *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie*, January-March 1930.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

*manique*, whose influence is not desired. In a lecture, which Lemaître gave in Paris, he objected that Barth begins the Christology with the Trinity instead of with the office of Christ, his character and his teaching. The starting-point must lead from the known to the unknown, viz., from the humanity to the divinity. Barth's *Commentary on Romans* only wearies him. The paradox is a mania with him. A deep gulf yawns between his theology and the original Christian thought. He says that this is particularly true since in Barth a mystical Christ-God is taking the place of the Savior of the Gospels. The tearing asunder of time and eternity is likewise rejected. History thereby becomes void. This theology is even directly dangerous in that it frightens the soul and creates a metaphysical distance between Christ and the soul in order to exalt Christ. "Whoever denies the immanence of God in man and in history, can only appropriate the religion of the God of Love at the price of illusory imaginings." <sup>10</sup>

It is easy to see how the understanding is here still obstructed by a polemical attitude in itself, as well as by the continued effect of a former, pure experience-theology and especially the influence of Vinet. The gentle Pelagianism of such a theology, which has as yet not passed through the crisis, here revolts against

<sup>10</sup> *L'Evangile et la Théologie du Dieu lointain*, Kuendig, Geneva, 1929.—*Divinité de Jesus-Christ*, Cahiers Protestants, 1929.—Piaget, *Immanentalisme et Foi religieuse*, 1930.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

the rigorous spirit of Calvin himself, while the fear of a reprimintation of orthodoxy blinds the view to what even here lies beyond that orthodoxy. Younger circles, who gather about Pasteur Maury and who occupy a wide sphere of discussion in the Christian Student Movement, assume a more favorable attitude toward the Barthian theology.

A group of young followers of Barth are publishing a magazine, *Hic et Nunc*, with a view to discussing and spreading Barthian ideas in France. But their theological abilities are hardly considered adequate to such a task and even their bibliography on Barthian literature in France is not complete.

## ITALY

The writer was greatly astonished when he recently discovered in Rome, in the small and new publishing establishment of the *Doxa*, a work-shop for the purpose of reworking and disseminating the Barthian theology in Italy. The publisher Gangale—a name worth remembering—here published a translation of Strauch's little book by Dr. Miegge, who recently addressed the Continental session of the Presbyterian Alliance at Elberfeld, under the title *Theologia della crisi*. The small Italian circle of friends of this theology is hindered neither by the Rationalism of the French spirit, nor by an encumbering, theological tradition, from receiving something new impartially. South-Italian mysticism, a speculative tendency, but still more the emphasis upon the simplest, the most

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

essential elements in the Gospel as over against the complicated system of authority, legality and theology of the Roman Catholic Church, are on the verge of opening up new paths for Barthianism. In difficult matters the understanding does, of course, often begin with misunderstandings. In the introduction of the above-mentioned volume the publisher designates Karl Barth an "Oswald Spengler of the Western Christian faith"; that, of course, is a distortion. On the other hand, Barth's theology is realized to be "the most tormenting utterance, and the most worthy of consideration, which Protestantism has been known to make for a century," and as such it is expressly approved.

The little store of Gangale, a dark and narrow corner in old Rome, is the strongest possible contrast to all the power and ostentatious splendor with which the Roman Church, in Rome especially, proclaims its existence and influence. The Barthian theology in itself, with its surrender of a rich and active church life, its declaration of the bankruptcy of ecclesiastical politics and the ado of parties, its surrender even of theology itself for the sake of something greater and more essential, is a *poor* theology in comparison with the Roman Church, so rich and tremendous in power, influence, life, theological scholastic labor. Barthian theology has made itself poor and therefore impresses the poor Waldensian Church as courageous and encouraging, as Comba's judgment demonstrates.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>61</sup> *La Luce*, 1931.

ENGLAND

The present ecclesiastical problems of England may best be seen in the conflict over the Prayer Book—a knowledge of the historical development and the churchly forms is here presupposed. The point in question is here not only a struggle between various theologies or churches, but a conflict between the ecclesiastical and religious trends of thought and basic attitudes, which not so much separate the individual churches one from another as divide all of them horizontally. The revised Prayer Book, which has twice been brought before Parliament, as a general British church problem, represents the intersection of different lines of religious thought, which approach and recede from one another, and which constitute the peculiarity of English Christianity by their attraction and their repulsion. It is of little use to speak of individual churches or theologies in this controversy. Even the Free Churches may not be entirely segregated theologically. Today they are forming a Protestant community of thought with certain personal and group divergencies. The Anglican Church represents an even greater variety of tendencies, which are partly identical with those in the Free Churches and partly directly contradictory to them.

One may best approach this perplexing plethora by seeking the various foci in the church life of the English people. This must be done at the risk of not being able to gather up all the strands of this entire

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

church life. The Quakers, for example, are hard to fit into any larger group.

In the conflict about the Prayer Book the following two foci became evident. One is the *institutional* conception of religion and church; the other is a *personal*, dispositional or prophetical appreciation of Christianity. The religious forces, which are concentrated in these foci, penetrate and cross one another at various junctures, however, and are separated completely only at their extreme ends. In the Anglican Church, which on the whole places the emphasis upon an institutional church life, there are, for instance, at the same time strong tendencies of evangelical, and therefore personal piety. The Congregational Church of England, on the other hand, tolerated an institutional tendency in the well-known preacher, Orchard. There is also a "Free Church Book of Common Prayer," which shows that ritualistic tendencies find their entry into Free Church life.

### A. *Institutional Ecclesiasticism* <sup>\*\*</sup>

For the adherents of this ecclesiasticism the church stands in the center of religious life as a sacred institution, instituted by Christ, endowed by him with supernatural powers which it administers and dispenses. It is the mystical body of Christ and as such acts mysteriously upon the members which belong to it, blessing and saving them.<sup>\*\*</sup> It came into existence

<sup>\*\*</sup> Cf. Keller, *Dynamis*, J. C. B. Mohr.

<sup>\*\*</sup> Cf. The writings of Baron von Huegel and Evelyn Underhill.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

as the foundation of the Savior by His call to the disciples. It therefore came into being earlier than the Scriptures, which have been selected and interpreted by it. The priority of scriptural authority, which the Reformation represents, has thus been drawn into question. Jesus, first of all, organized the church before He gave it definite teachings and instructions. The mystical union of the soul with Jesus is more important than the later religious or theological knowledge. By His very epiphany He unites men. This creation of communion, which begins with His incarnation, is infinitely more binding, saving and direct than the reflected relation, which is brought about by word, theological knowledge and ethical living of individuals or individual groups. The question is one of having a share in this divine establishment of a saving institution, of being placed in it and of being saved thereby, rather than of carrying on personal discussions or of possessing ethical convictions. The objectivity and divine predestination of salvation works in and through this institution, which was founded without the coöperation of man; its spiritual power and influence may not be attained by any individual decision nor understood or comprehended completely by any subjectivity. In its origin, its character and aims it remains divine even though its expression in history has its heights and depths and though it has empirically become estranged from its true meaning.

In its historical appearance the nature of the

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

church, as the *Lambeth Quadrilateral* states it, is characterized by four elements:

1. By the possession of the Bible, the Old and the New Testament.
2. By the Creed of primitive Christianity.
3. By the two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.
4. By the historic episcopate.

Since all emphasis is placed upon membership in the church, the individual and particularly theology enjoy considerable freedom in the appreciation and treatment of the Holy Scriptures. Even the Anglo-Catholics, i.e., the most extreme, institutional party within the Anglican Church, unconcernedly accepted the principles of Bible criticism after Bishop Gore had published his great book, *Lux Mundi*. This position really allows more freedom with the Bible than with the Creed which is to be accepted without deduction or interpretation just as the ancient church coined it, particularly the Nicene Creed. To institutionalism in the concept of the church corresponds a concrete sacramentalism which is not far removed in its extremest expression from the doctrine of the *opus operatum* and from a magical effect. The conception of the sacraments by institutional piety forbids, of course, every mere symbolism, every effervescent spirituality, and teaches a real presence and a real effect of divine grace, whereby the subjectivity in the act of appropriation is reduced to a minimum.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

Here then all emphasis is placed upon the objective, the divine factor of salvation, and the endeavor to keep the surpassing, sovereign work of God in Christ free from individual interpretations, opinions and forms of conduct.

Since the church is an institution that has visibly been incorporated in an earthly world and does not exist in a pneumatic state, it requires concrete forms also in its constitution. It is not a society that is formed by the consent of its members, not an invisible fellowship in which one has a share according to sentiment and faith, but a concrete and visible institution, which has its historical continuity assured by the episcopate.

An institutionalism based on principles finds expression primarily in this conception of the episcopate and its historical significance. It is, of course, difficult for the dogmatical interest of the church to stand fast against historical investigations, as Canon Streeter, for instance, conducted them. For he established the fact that primitive Christianity not only knew the episcopal form of government but also *different* kinds. In spite of such historical investigations the episcopalian constitution becomes a dogmatical fact, *stantis et cadentis ecclesiæ*. This became particularly evident in the conflict about the Prayer Book, where it was manifest that for the institutionalists the episcopate belongs to the very nature of the church, while this is a question of secondary importance for the

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

Protestants, even for those within the Anglican Church.

In its final expression this institutionalism may hardly be differentiated from that of the Roman Catholic Church, which claims that *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. The Anglican institutionalism is not so exclusive, however, as not to have room for an evangelical spirituality, which vibrates within this conception as an undertone. The Bible is therefore not pure, didactic law, not binding letter, but becomes a vehicle of the Spirit and can stand the freedom of research. The Creed likewise does not become a matter for the individual conscience. The church confesses it and the individual retains a personal freedom of interpretation and personal spiritual responsibility. In regard to the sacraments an evangelical spiritual attitude finds room in the conception of faith as imparted grace and thereby avoids a mere magical conception. The episcopal office finally is guarded against the danger of becoming a purely hierarchic institution by the doctrine of apostolic succession and its communication of the Spirit.

Within the Anglican Church, where this institutionalism is at home, there are all sorts of degrees of combination with this spiritual attitude. They balance one another in the Anglican center party, but institutionalism decidedly occupies the foreground among the Anglo-Catholics, while the spiritual attitude assumes the lead among the evangelical group

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

of this church, to whom institutionalism appears as a bare external framework for the evangelical elements, as it does among the Anglican Evangelical Group.\*\*\*

### B. *The Piety of Personal Conviction*

This is represented especially by the Free Churches. They not only form a fellowship of conviction, but are loosely joined together in two organizations, the Federal Council of the Churches and the National Free Church Council.

If institutionalism has remained acutely conscious of its relationship to the ancient church, here it adheres to its relationship with the *Reformation*. Upon the Word and the Spirit the Church is founded as a free fellowship of such who hold to Jesus Christ by personal decision and conviction. The Church is not an institution but a fellowship conditioned by vocation and conviction, and it is established by the Word and our obedience. The religious relationship is determined by grace, freely granted and personally appropriated by faith, and not by the relation to a saving institution. Sacramental emphasis is superseded by personal decision for the proffered salvation and the ethical obedience in which a religion of the will and the conscience finds expression. Such religion bears a personal and subjective character and demands the staking of one's whole personality. The Spirit does not work in organized and definite forms but in

\*\*\* Of which Archdeacon Storr is the President.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

personalities that are controlled by the Word and in which He may become prophetic power. It is considered the true, uniting power to such an extent that the historical forms of constitution and the organization, viz., the institution, are of secondary importance. It makes possible the common priesthood and thereby renders the episcopal question so irrelevant that it may be solved in various ways. The Christian lives by the Word and the Spirit, and the form is of no significance whatever. Spiritual Protestantism may, as it does among the Quakers, even come to have a genuine contempt for form.

This religion of personal conviction, with which the evangelical Christian responds to the revelation by the Word, may be found in all evangelical churches. The evangelical spiritual attitude, which is to be found among them and which to some extent penetrates even Anglicanism, received its original impetus from Wittenberg and Geneva. The ecclesiastical expression, however, is original with English Congregationalism and Independentism, in Presbyterianism, Methodism, Quakerism, and the Baptist faith, which are differentiated one from the other more by particular questions of doctrine, worship and organization than by their central relationship to the Reformation.

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Fundamentally the conflict over the Prayer Book was the conflict between these two religious attitudes.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

For the Anglican Church the point in question was to establish order and a certain unity in a variously divided church, and to do this upon the basis of uniting both claims, that of institutionalism as well as that of the religion of personal conviction. For this church would be catholic as well as evangelical. The term "bridge-church," which the writer applied to it and which was generally accepted and has often been used since, implies therefore not only the union of two different churches but also the bridging of inner contradictions within its far-reaching expanse. It implies the very genius for compromise which characterizes this church. By decision of Parliament, i.e., by the rejection of the proposed draft of the Prayer Book, the Protestant character of this Magna Carta of the Anglican Church has again been emphasized. The opposite tendency has, however, been strengthened again in the sense of a re-catholicizing of the Anglican Church (which must not be confused with Romanizing) by the attitude of the bishops and the subsequent Lambeth Conference.

Institutional piety emphasizes the divine revelation as given and as existing objectively; it stresses the substantial forms in which it expresses itself, the staticism of the religious fellowship in which the individual simply shares, the authority which is established by the realization of the presence of the divine. The idea of responsible conviction, on the other hand, attaches all importance to the personal testimony of God, the personal decision, the inner relationship to

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

Christ and the dynamic of the ethical will which it is kindling.

Institutional divine worship places the liturgy and the sacrament at the center. The believer comes into the church in order to "realize" the presence of God and primarily to worship the majesty of the sovereign God. In the cult of the fellowships of personal conviction the Word of God is central and the sermon moves the conscience and humbles one before the judicial authority of God, which again raises the soul by the comfort of grace and arouses enthusiasm for new surrender.

There we find tradition, artistic form, mystical contemplation, worship. Here convulsion of the conscience, personal decision and surrender stand in the foreground.

Upon these two basic positions<sup>44</sup> various groups have been formed without, however, emerging as regular organizations or parties. Let us begin with the two most extreme groups.

### *A. The Anglo-Catholic Group<sup>45</sup>*

The institutional conception of the church has here been worked out most consistently. The church is catholic, episcopalian, sacramental and sacerdotal. The connection with the ancient church by means of confession and constitution is strictly adhered to.

<sup>44</sup> *Dogma in History and Thought*, 1929.

<sup>45</sup> *Essays Catholic and Critical*, 1925 (unites catholic tradition and modern science).

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

Patristics is therefore its favorite field of theological labor. The concept of the Church differs from that of the Roman Church primarily in the refusal to recognize the pope as head, while a number of theologians would, on the other hand, concede him the rank of *primus inter pares* as Bishop of Rome. The tradition of the Old Catholic Church is determinative. This does not, however, exclude critical study of the Bible and of tradition. Anglo-Catholic scholars have labored successfully in this very field.<sup>\*\*</sup> Catholicism is emphasized so strongly that the Reformation, to say the least, is looked upon as an error, as destructive of the original catholic unity of the Church. Individual theologians such as Darwell Stone or Osborne or Sidney Dark in the *Church Times*, go still further in their polemical rejection of Protestantism and combat it vehemently as the sin of individualism and subjectivism. An appreciation of the fundamental questions of the Reformation is here wanting completely. In its place the ancient, dogmatical inheritance is carefully guarded. The Thirty-Nine Articles of ecclesiastical tradition are relegated to the background because of their evangelical content. The episcopalian constitution belongs not only to the *bene esse* of the church but to its *esse*. The apostolic succession of the bishops guarantees not only the continuity and order, but also the efficacy of the sacraments and the spiritual validity of office. In view of the recognition of the bishop's authority, it is

<sup>\*\*</sup> Herbert Leslie Stewart, *A Century of Anglo-Catholicism*, 1929.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

surprising again and again that even Anglo-Catholic priests resist this authority in individual dioceses.

The appropriation of divine grace takes place by way of the sacraments. The real presence in the eucharist is taught. They demand the reservation of the elements and the tendency is evidently to use them not only for the communion of the sick but for the purpose of worship. All the forms of the ancient church in liturgy, vestments and custom is again revived. Extreme leaders of this movement, such as Darwell Stone, the Bishop of Truro, Canon Lacey, Rawlinson, Mozley, also endeavor to justify this re-catholicizing of the Anglican Church historically and systematically. A few even demand worship of the holy Virgin, of relics, and monasticism, which is already being practiced by a few orders and other associations.

This Anglo-Catholicism has gained a firm hold especially in the south of England and most of all in London, and fosters zealous relations with the old-Catholics and the Orthodox Churches of the Orient.

### *B. The Evangelical Group.*

Directly opposite this Anglo-Catholicism there stands a live, evangelical group which represents the old orthodox and pietistic Christianity of the Reformation. The principal evangelical ideas—justification by faith, spiritual appropriation of grace, the common priesthood, the sole authority of the Scriptures—are here presented in a Protestant manner.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

This attitude is found especially in that portion of Anglicanism which wants “no popery” and which forgets the Protestant origin of the English Reformation as little as the Presbyterian, Methodist or Baptist Churches. Since we must understand this group less as an ecclesiastical organization than as a trend of thought, we may also mention the *Evangelical Alliance* in connection with these churches. Here the evangelically minded have built it up for themselves, though not without some opposition, a fighting and defensive organization against the encroachments of both the Anglo-Catholics and Liberals. This evangelical wing is somewhat more closely related to the Continent than the other groups.

This is “old Protestant England,” which has followers in the Anglican State Church as well as in Nonconformity.

### C. *The Modernist Group*

In the center we find a broad and not altogether uniform mass which comprises various groups, such as the Anglican Evangelical Group and the Modern Churchmen. It may be compared to a mild Continental liberalism or to our modern-theological “center.” A radical left wing sees in Bishop Barnes an intrepid leader, who would today risk a conflict even with the Archbishop. This group is less controlled by the philosophical or liberal religious principle of the former Continental liberalism, than by the endeavor to

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

accommodate the Christian faith with modern knowledge of nature and to clear the road for critical research. Bishop Barnes is certainly as much at home in the writings of Darwin and Huxley, of the physicist Eddington or of Whitehead, as in the theological writings of the last decades. He sees a necessary advance in a combination of the doctrine of evolution and Christianity by means of which a reconciliation may be established between science and the church. One cannot say, however, that this evolutionist and cultural liberalism has gained much of a following in the Anglican church world.

Most churchmen would bring the evangelical tradition of their church into moderate harmony with the assured results of modern historical research, criticism and culture as such. This liberal-modernist position is therefore tolerant of an Anglican institutional element, while at the same time having a purely Protestant character in the Free Churches. A comparison with the Continent suggests that the theology of Ritschl, as well as the historico-religious school, Troeltsch's philosophy of religion, modern Bible criticism, the experience-theology of Herrmann, the "Kultur Protestantismus," would find followers in this broad central field for a mediating theology.

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Barthian theology encounters these various thought-forms and groups of church and theology

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

as it invades England. Up to the present it has not experienced a real, critical clash as it has in Germany. The English churches are content, for the time being, to take cognizance of it and to register a first reaction to the challenging positions of this movement. The foregoing exposition, however, will show where the lines of battle must lie and what possibilities there are for an understanding.

Several books of the Barthian theology have been translated into English.<sup>\*\*</sup> A few general remarks may be made before we begin to analyze this new contact and discussion. In no other country do tradition, national and psychological idiosyncracy, "common sense" and then again a certain Platonic factor in the national ecclesiastical thought, as it is typified particularly by Dean Inge, offer such unique preliminary conditions for a discussion as in England.

The English mind starts with facts and usually ends with experiences. It is empirical, concrete and conservative even in theology. It is neither disposed to abstraction nor to intellectual revolution. At this

<sup>\*\*</sup> Emil Brunner, *Theology of Crisis*, Scribners, 1929.—Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, Pilgrim, 1928. *The Epistle to the Romans* (Oxford University Press, 1933); *The Resurrection of the Dead* (Revell, Hodder & Stoughton, 1933). Cf. also Birch Hoyle, as well as articles by Keller, in the *Expositor*, *Congregational Quarterly*, 1927; by Mackintosh, *Society of Historical Theology*, 1928/1929, *Journal of Theological Studies*, July 1929; by Harvey in the *Modern Churchman*, January-February 1931. For a general appreciation compare also Vollrath, *Theologie der Gegenwart in Grossbritannien*, 1928; John McConnachie, *Hibbert Journal*, vol. 25; *Significance of Karl Barth*, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, Hodder & Stoughton.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

point we meet a difficulty in the path of understanding. While the dialectical semi-darkness of the new theology makes understanding difficult for French Rationalism, it is the insistent abstraction, especially of the lines of thought of Barth and Gogarten, which is proving a hindrance in England.

Campbell Morgan feels as though thunder were crashing over him when he reads these abstractions. Even the *Church Times* complains that Barth possesses religious earnestness but is incomprehensible. The revolutionary idea, the radicalism of this theology of faith likewise require mediation for the English spirit, which is averse to any violent overthrow, any radical demand, which would draw into question the prevalent, tried, solidly organized mental structure and perhaps even the British Empire. It prefers gentle transitions, graceful assimilation of the new, to all noisily proclaimed world revolutions: "*Glissez, Mortels, n'appuyez pas!*"

At any rate, the spirit of Erasmus is still alive in Anglicanism, and even a Nonconformist like Vernon Bartlett stated recently at the theologians' conference of the Movement of Faith and Order that the religious attitude of the English people is largely semi-Pelagian.

It is therefore necessary that this new theology be translated into a concrete and propagandist challenge, in order that larger sections in England may understand the point in question.

A preliminary survey reveals furthermore that the

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

understanding of English theologians is more amenable to the critical, i.e., the negative side of the Barthian theology than its real, positive, dialectical theses. In so far as the Barthian theology is proving itself a judgment upon Continental Rationalism, theological conceit, psychologism, critique and culture Protestantism, it not only finds an agreeable welcome and is looked upon as a "storm over Continental unbelief," but it also serves as a warning and clears the air wherever British theology itself stands in jeopardy of such attacks.<sup>11</sup>

The closer relation in England between theology and the church is also important for the assimilation of new ideas. England cannot endure any absolute division into a scientific and an ecclesiastical theology. The spirit of Overbeck spells no danger for the English church. Theology is responsible to the church.

In addition, English theology has tried in a conservative way to retain the evangelical content in its thought even where criticism was taking effect. The character of compromise, which marks the Anglican Church, is largely characteristic of its theology and admits of a reconciliation of critical and evangelical thought where the Continent already has an uncompromising cleavage. Seen from this angle Continental theology easily appears to the more conservative Englishman as too violently radical, too one-sided and dangerous to the faith.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Bishop Bell in *Mysterium Christi*.—S. Joad, *The Present and Future of Religion*, Macmillan.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

To this must be added the insular psychology. To be sure, England has markedly assimilated modern German theology, but only in the relatively small circle of experts, not counting the large works of popular interest, as, for instance, those by Harnack, Deissmann and Otto. This insular psychology also expresses itself in that peculiar rhythm of opposition and reception to which Vollrath has pointed. It prevents a too-easy influx of foreign thought and admits cautious doses of foreign intellectual goods to the English thought-world. English "common sense" and empiricism act like a protective covering against any too exotic influences.

• • • • •

Where now, after these preliminary remarks, may we find points of departure for an understanding with the new theology? In what degree is the religious situation of England at all similar to our problems and what needs and movements are arising therefrom? What elements of English church life form bridges to the Continent and what doors are definitely closed? A treatment of these questions can at most be only suggestive.

Let it be said, first of all, that the Barthian theology has hardly penetrated into the general church consciousness in England and, for the present, remains largely a purely theological matter.\*\*

\*\* Cf. *British Weekly*, May 7, 1931, an article by Hutton on the *Significance of Karl Barth*.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

In the general theological situation there arises a twofold desire for a synthesis of keenly felt antitheses. One is the wish for a closer union of theology with the modern scientific consciousness. Theology considers itself compelled to this by the entry of the modern scientific knowledge of a Bertrand Russell, an Einstein, Eddington and Whitehead into the receptive consciousness of our time. The second requirement is for a synthesis of faith and criticism. These are two concerns which occupied Continental theology for fifty years and have never relinquished their hold.<sup>10</sup>

How markedly the first dominates the thought, especially of the central group, is demonstrated by a glance at the theology of the Lambeth Conference,<sup>11</sup> which is a typical attempt at a modern ecclesiastical synthesis between theology and science. It is stated there that the scientific climate is more favorable to-day than it was a generation ago, and really challenges the making of such a synthesis. This is to be accomplished by putting as much as possible of the beauty and order of the world into the idea of God. In the progress of the incarnation, even civilization, in so far as it is good, is proving to be a gift from God. Likewise do "we recognize in the modern discoveries of Science—whereby the boundaries of knowledge are extended, the needs of men are satisfied and their sufferings alleviated—veritable gifts of God to be

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Titus, *Natur und Gott*.

<sup>11</sup> *Lambeth*, 1930.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

used with thankfulness to Him" (*Lambeth*, 1930, page 40).

Christian theology shall accordingly be taught in close alliance with the philosophy, science and criticism of the times. God's immanent, creative activity in the world continues. God is transcendent and immanent. He is the instigator of the upward movement, which has come into the history of mankind with the incarnation, which in turn stands in the center of dogmatic interest.

It is remarkable that this aspiration of "Culture-Protestantism" has appeared in the Lambeth theology.

In this aspiration there still lives a theological and ecclesiastical optimism, which Continental theology no longer possesses. In spite of the fact that the masses are leaving the church there is as yet no faltering of ecclesiasticism, there is no doubt that the church with its spiritual possessions can be the salvation of the world. Duty to the church is still part of the relation to God. Lambeth theology as yet knows no theology of despair. The spiritual life in man enables him to enter into relationship with God. God and man are united. The human and the divine do not exclude each other. In the highest ideals which human consciousness recognizes there is found a revelation of the ideals which are present with the divine Spirit. God is active in man, especially in his greatest abilities, and is his constant inner impetus.

Religion as such has its origin in man's intuitive

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

consciousness of God. Coöperation with God is easily established by ethical effort. In mystical experience man gains direct access to God.

Wherever in the foreground of theological interest there stands such a synthesis of science and Gospel, of faith and criticism, wherever the impossibility of the human situation is not realized to the point of crying out, there can be no appreciation of the final tensions which have called forth the Barthian theology. "Common sense" stands before the incomprehensible, not knowing what to do with it. Canon Raven<sup>11</sup> sees the principal error of this theology that it neglects the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the human reality of the life of Jesus, the message of divine love, Christian experiences of communion with God,—"a creed of despair!"

Parallel to that Lambeth theology of 1930, which presents a compromise in itself, there are similar expressions on the part of the Free Churches in which this same contradiction is clearly expressed. We shall quote a few that are especially typical. Dr. Garvie,<sup>12</sup> who is one of the most prominent leaders of the Protestant Free Churches, publicly makes known his dislike of the new theology. He finds in it "a lamentable reaction" against the theological progress of the last fifty years and admits that he does not understand Barth at all. He does indeed approve of the

<sup>11</sup> *Jesus and Gospel of Love*, 1931.

<sup>12</sup> A. E. Garvie, *Christian Ideals for Human Society*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1930.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

Barthian criticism of a shallow optimism, an evolutionist idealism and a superficial activism, but from his modern Protestant standpoint he can find only Manichæan and Gnostic influences in the Barthian dualism. Everything is torn asunder, the absolute and the relative, world and God, immanence and transcendence. Over against the profound pessimism of Barth he puts the optimistic challenge to realize salvation, "to work out" what God has begun in individual character and in social progress. How far Dr. Garvie is from understanding the deep spiritual concern of this theology may be seen from his judgment that Barthianism is one of the minor evils of the consequences of the war.

John Oman <sup>"</sup> misses the answer to the question of what the Word of God really is and how we may recognize it as such.

Bertram Lee Woolf <sup>"</sup> joins partly in this rejection because he sees in Barthian theology a bit of German self-criticism. He sees in it the gratifying desire to become free of the former German intellectual trend. The lack of appreciation for science and history as well as for experience is rejected without inquiring into the profounder theological reasons. Similarly W. Selbie, though appreciating Barth's earnestness, criticizes his conception of history and his opinion of experience.<sup>"</sup>

<sup>"</sup> *Theological Studies*, 1920/21.

<sup>"</sup> *Christian World*, January 17, 1929.

<sup>"</sup> Selbie in *Society of Historical Theology*, 1928/29.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

Since modern English theology of the center is strongly dominated by a theology of experience<sup>77</sup> and historical criticism, its protest against Barthianism's attack upon the theology of experience and against its underestimation of history is understandable, in spite of the assent to the critique of a psychological historicism.<sup>78</sup> A commensurate discussion with the Barthian theology, which would spring from the depths as in Germany, is not possible in England as yet. It still impresses many as so foreign that they try to understand it, from the influences of the War, as a "desperado-theology,"<sup>79</sup> and consider the grammatical derivation of Trinitarian theology as German pedantry.

For similar reasons, also, the critical idealism of Platonists like Inge holds itself aloof. It beholds the source of most sublime truth in the Logos and finds the teacher of Wisdom realized in Christ. In the kenotic Christology of Mackintosh and Garvie<sup>80</sup> the attempt is made to bring the incarnation into a reasonable relationship to psychology and to comprehend the incarnation of Christ historically as the starting-point of redemption. Bethune-Baker<sup>81</sup> would even reconcile dogma and evolutionism with the doctrine of the incarnation.

By this sketch of the various attitudes in English

<sup>77</sup> John Oman in *Theological Studies*, 1920/21.

<sup>78</sup> Ch. H. Harvey in the *Modern Churchman*, January-February, 1931.

<sup>79</sup> *Modern Churchman*, January-February, 1931.

<sup>80</sup> Garvie, and Creed in *Mysterium Christi*, Furche, Berlin, 1931.

<sup>81</sup> *Theology*, October 1928.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

theology and church life it will easily become evident that resistance will develop even where it has not been at all voiced at the present time. The possibility of Christian experience, the value of history, the transcendence of God, the reconciliation with science appear even now as controversial points where the conflict must start.

. . . . .

Still a different course will be taken by the discussion with the first group, the Anglo-Catholic institutionalists,<sup>11</sup> who have not yet realized the actual concern of the Reformation. At first there appear, indeed, to be points of contact in the Anglo-Catholic emphasis on objectivity, in the adherence to the ancient creeds, in the concept of the church, in the concept of authority, in the union of catholicism and criticism. As a matter of fact Kenneth Mozley has, in a few points, proved the possibility of an understanding from this angle in the compilation, *Mysterium Christi*. He says, for instance, that the concern of Christian faith is not with an upward movement of man but with a downward movement of God, and he emphasizes at another place that we "miss much when we neglect (this theology)." Rawlinson also calls it "stimulating, epoch making." But he declares emphatically that the time for an evaluation has not yet come.

To have placed Jesus Christ in the center of the

<sup>11</sup> *Essays Catholic and Critical*, 1929. Cf. also Rawlinson and Mozley in *Mysterium Christi*, 1931.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

Barthian theology as a revelation of God, brings the Barthians into proximity with the favorite doctrine of this group, namely the incarnation, which has become the true heart of Anglicanism and essentially its philosophy of life.<sup>\*\*</sup> Here Anglo-Catholicism will claim to be able to contribute a few points to Barthianism in order to strengthen and deepen the Catholic beginnings, which are observed in it. For it is from this point that the chasm between the supernatural and the natural, which Karl Barth has widened unduly, will be narrowed again for the Anglicans. Thus says the recognized leader of Anglo-Catholicism, Bishop Gore.<sup>\*\*</sup> It is emphatically pointed out that Anglo-Catholicism offers the ancient Catholic elements in more acceptable form than Rome, and that it possesses an ancient Catholic inheritance in the emphasis on the objective, on the Creed, on the concept of the Church, the sole revelation in Christ and his incarnation, which should also be welcome to the objectivism of Barth. In spite of this, it is not clear how a theology of the pure Word will in the long run be able to reach an understanding with a theology of concrete institutions and hierarchical requirements. It is not possible as yet to say anything final on this point.

It is evident that up to the present neither Anglican orthodoxy, so sure of salvation, nor the Methodist and Baptist piety of experience, nor the

<sup>\*\*</sup> Temple, *Christus Veritas*, 1924.

<sup>\*\*</sup> Gore, *Philosophy of Good Life*, 1930.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

individualistic theological looseness in Congregationalism, nor the “Culture-Protestantism” in Anglicanism, as well as in Non-Conformity, have so far been seriously touched by the fire of the Barthian criticism.

In spite of such lack of appreciation or direct repulsion, the questioning of the Barthian theology penetrates deeply into the interest of the English church and theology today. Even the daily press, the *Times*, has become attentive, although it says of the system that it is “not easy to grasp, subtle, difficult, baffling.” The pores of understanding are opening up—in Anglicanism as well as in Non-Conformism,—wherever the ineffectiveness of the existing organized church for our generation is recognized and one is seeking a new word for a new time. They open up also where the English Christian is shaken in his otherwise idiosyncratic sureness in life and conduct, where he breaks through the Pelagianism with which he was endowed to the real question of the Reformation, the gracious God, and where the essential contrast between God and world is finally recognized in the breaking down of one’s own world. This is not the case today in any group or church or faculty, but it is true of many individuals, who are not able perhaps to follow the intellectual paradoxes, nor willing to admit their practical consequences, but who surmise that a new seriousness has made its appearance and that this new word of the transcendent God, remote from the world, must surely be heard

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

because He seems to withdraw from the world more noticeably and more terribly than ever.

The *British Weekly*, edited by the Scotsman, Hutton, hardly permits a week to pass without discussing Barth (with a regrettable omission of Brunner and Gogarten). He compares him to Hildebrand <sup>11</sup> with his exclusive fervor for the church of Christ. Dr. Hutton has evidently, however, found the way to an understanding of Barth by way of his Scotch Calvinism. This will be dealt with in the next section.

The presentation of Birch Hoyle <sup>12</sup> reveals a serious endeavor to enter deeply into the problems of Barth. In the *British Weekly*, also, the attempt is made to retranslate the abstract and theological trend of thought into religious and prophetic experiences, which are accessible to a limited circle (*Kreis*).

Lecture tours by Visser 't Hooft and Brunner have furthered the understanding. Still more, however, is this done by the distress of the church in which "the old concepts have lost their glamour and the differentiation between good and evil begins to disappear." <sup>13</sup> To an Oxford friend I owe the information that the proclamation of the wholly different God, the Word of God as a call from another world, is beginning to have its effect and to undermine every confusion of God and man with each other. Where this is understood, the road is clear.

<sup>11</sup> *British Weekly*, May 7, 1931.

<sup>12</sup> Birch Hoyle, *The Teaching of Karl Barth*, S. C. M.

<sup>13</sup> *British Weekly*, April 4, 1931.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

For example, from the most remote confines of the British Empire, from New Zealand, there comes an indication, which is observed even in England, that the "English-speaking world will soon be ready to recognize Barth." The *Outlook* calls him a new and great light in the theological sky and the "Calvin of the Twentieth Century" who is again teaching us the "greatness, the majesty, the glory of God," and who is making it rather difficult for us to speak of our "dear Savior," and of our "sweet Redeemer."

In the understanding of a new theology the boundaries of the generations again become evident. While the recognized leaders have difficulty in grasping the new, youth, in small study groups in England and Scotland, is reaching out for the new and more nourishing fare which is being offered them more and more in translations and introductions. The novelty, the paradox, the boldness of thought, the poetical form, awaken interest even where one refuses to enter into the depths of its demands. Thus the National Eisteddfod, at which the Welsh bards assemble, offered a prize in 1932 for "The Contribution of Karl Barth to Theology."

### SCOTLAND

Scottish theology and church life must be viewed from other angles. Here is an old Calvinistic country whose Reformation was directly influenced by Geneva. Calvinism fixed the character and faith of this people, profoundly gripping even its customs

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

and feeling. It gave also ecclesiastical unity, although this has but recently found organic expression by the union of two churches. Scotland owes to Calvinism its better educational system; it owes to it a better theological training, compared with England, its spiritual energy, its national ethos. For a long time the Scottish people were considered on the Continent as having been the most faithful to the Calvinistic tradition. Without doubt Maclaren's descriptions of Scottish religious life which quite evidently were pictures of types of shepherds and farmers who were not only steeped in the Calvinistic manner of living but also in Calvinistic dogmatics, contributed to this. This would hardly prove true today, because the modern spirit has also entered Scottish Calvinism.

Scottish theology, however, has not experienced the same softening and weakening as that of the Continent. It was protected by its intimate relationship with the ardent faith-life and missionary activity of the church. It considered itself the servant of the church, much more so than has ever been true on the Continent. It preserved its evangelical character more tenaciously and fervently and became so sure of itself that it believed itself capable of tolerating an admixture of historico-critical theology. In the dispute between faith and criticism the latter did not usurp the leadership but served faith more willingly than on the Continent where criticism developed into a sort of autonomous theology. This attitude of service on the part of theology toward the

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

church could not, however, have been maintained without scientific martyrs like Robertson Smith.

In spite of all adherence to the evangelical character of the church, Scottish theology has, since the middle of the last century, opened its doors to the influence of modern theology and has developed it independently. A large number of theologians studied in Germany, receiving there the Lutheran influences, emanating from Ritschl and Herrmann. While Lutheranism, in spite of strong influences during the time of the Reformation, was practically unknown in England and has only recently been rediscovered, Scottish theology always concerned itself with Lutheranism and furnished the best presentation of Luther in the English language.<sup>\*\*</sup> It assumed a brotherly attitude toward Lutheranism and even today is eagerly fostering the relationship. The Scottish Church has, for example, not only assisted its own Reformed brethren on the Continent with its relief work, but, like Switzerland, has proved its sympathy with the Lutheran churches by a permanent Continental commission.

This theological and church relationship of Scotland to the Continent belongs to its conscious, ecclesiastical politics. While ecclesiastical England (and the Anglican more so than the Non-Conformist) has preserved its insular character and has but slightly fostered a closer relation with the Continent and only through a few individual churchmen (also being

<sup>\*\*</sup> Cf. the first English work on Luther by Mackinnon.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

more handicapped because of language barriers), Scotland insists upon remaining *en rapport* with the Protestant churches of the Continent. And this not only within the confessional boundaries, but upon the broad basis of common Protestant interests and in the sense of general Protestant church politics." Although it is not yet fully realized, the cultivation of a Protestant policy is one of the tasks of present World Protestantism, especially in respect to Eastern Europe, for the guidance and direction of the independent movements which spring up like weeds, and as a counterpoise to Roman politics in the East.

The adherence to the Word as the sole authority, the covenantal basis of church life, the old and unbroken Reformed tradition, the close relation of theology and church, the interest in Continental theology, the conscious connection with the Calvinistic spirit, and the national character which is inclined to blunt and radical solutions, all these factors must create a favorable basis for the essential questions of Barthian theology. Barth and Brunner, as well as Visser 't Hooft, have found the most friendly echo in Scotland and are frequently invited to theological conferences. Barth's *Dogmatik* at the present time is being published in an English translation by a Scotsman (Thomson), while individual theologians like Mackintosh, Cairns, Hutton, McConnachie " and

" Scotsman, February 6, 1931.

" John McConnachie, *The Significance of Karl Barth; The Barthian Theology*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1931.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

Curtis have passed beyond the stage of merely taking notice and have entered upon real study and discussion.

To these signs of a coming appreciation must be added an element of inner distress, which has always paved the way for a theology of crisis. Scotland also realizes that profounder symptoms are indicated in the unchurching of our time than only the indifference and defection of the masses. Prominent Reformed churchmen like Professor Bowman connect the unchurching of youth primarily with the weakening of theology and the dilution of the Creed. He claims that what has been left of a Christian confession is little more than a heap of ruins, and that among educated youth this has had devastating effects. He further insists, that in order to render religion more attractive, they have obscured profounder truth, that they no longer know the wrath of God against sin, and that consequently the saving love of Christ has also lost its meaning and its power. Even though it is not safe to generalize from one expression of sorrowful or angry excitement, such voices are nevertheless significant. Professor Mackintosh has pointed out that Scotland, after a period of over-theologizing, is now passing through a period of failing theological interest and is frequently putting basic problems aside in favor of such questions as missions, ethical life, and practical activity.<sup>•1</sup>

This dilution of belief because of the influx of

<sup>•1</sup> According to *Scots Observer*.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

modern thought causes much uneasiness among the people and compels theology to revert to the question of belief, viz., meditation upon the real message of the church. John McConnachie<sup>\*\*</sup> strongly emphasizes the point that not only the church as a whole but particularly the preachers are passing through a crisis and that much of the present-day preaching is Pelagian or semi-Pelagian. This is parallel to an emphatic demand of the Barthian theology. The conditions for a discussion are therefore very favorable. The points of contact for a theology of the Word and of Revelation, for the sovereignty of God, for the importance of predestination, for the union of faith in revelation and Biblical criticism, for heroic demands, are present in the tradition, in the present situation and in the character of the people. One is less sure about other theological formulations of the Barthian theology. A certain discrepancy is sensed between the religious rediscovery of the sovereignty of God, on the one hand, and its dualistic theological formulation and the dialectical method. It is not appreciated that the insistence upon transcendence and revelation simultaneously require a depreciation of history and of experience. The opinion is expressed that religious deepening, theological earnestness, a recollection of the basic Reformation position might be more important and fruitful than the essentially theological formulations of the Barthians. Undoubtedly, however, Barthian questioning

<sup>\*\*</sup> *British Weekly*, April, 1931.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

has touched to the quick the Calvinistic nerve of Scotland. This is due mainly to the untiring effort of John McConnachie, whose recent book on Barth is a masterpiece of up-to-date interpretation of Barthianism and, with a few omissions, of the discussion which it called forth in Germany.

### AMERICA <sup>\*\*</sup>

Perhaps nowhere does the transitional character of present-day Christianity find such strong expression as in America. The ever-increasing diversity and confused variegation, the quick shifting from position to position, the pursuit of new slogans, the experimentation with religious and educational methods, the mission spirit, and the wild tangle of religious sects,—all these make evident the fact that a landslide has been started within the depths of the American soul which will not readily be halted. The unrest not only descends beneath the foundations of the confessional churches, it also reaches beyond them into the youth movement and into the intellectual world which feels the religious problems of the time much more tensely and acutely than the established churches which are still relatively stable.

But it is extremely difficult to find the position

<sup>\*\*</sup> W. A. Brown, *The Church in America*, Macmillan, 1922.—Adolf Keller, *Dynamis*, Mohr, 1924.—Hermann Werdermann, *Das Religiöse Angesicht Amerikas*, Bertelsmann, Gütersloh, 1926.—Sasse, *Amerikanisches Kirchentum*, 1927.—*Yearbook of the Churches*. Macfarland, *Christian Unity in Practice and Prophecy*, Macmillan, 1933.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

from which America may justly be estimated. There is no concept of a standard of Christianity or church life which may be applied as a norm to the ecclesiastical and religious life. Nor may we simply select our position from within European Protestantism, as numerous expositions of American life have done in recent years. By doing that, only particular features are emphasized but not the true physiognomy of religious America. Even though such partial impressions may be correct, we have in them, more often than not, the judgment rendered by European finality or by its impatience, which wants to appraise the dynamics of American life on the basis of the statics of European life; it is an attempt to gauge the relation to God as sought or presented by another people, in the perspective of its own assured private relationship. It is probably true that parents are least qualified to judge their children justly and with due appreciation. And the American "children" have grown so sensitive to such parental statements by the Old World that it is advisable to practice caution in expressing judgment.<sup>\*\*\*</sup> This is particularly true because the relationship of America and Europe is passing through a distinct crisis.

After the War, America rediscovered old Europe as a new world. With the shaking of hands and the enthusiasm of finding each other there arose plans

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Macfarland calls attention to this in his new volume, *Christian Unity in Practice and Prophecy*, including the Laymen's Foreign Missions inquiry, which he fully analyzes.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

for a world-wide, Christian community of labor, the construction of which was quickly undertaken without laying a deeper, spiritual foundation. There is no use in blinding ourselves to the fact that we are further apart today than we were directly after the War. The enthusiasm quickly gave way to criticism. It is the necessary transition to a deeper appreciation. America no longer beholds in Europe the spiritual homeland, the source of its own culture and religion as it did a few years ago; it sees in Europe the center of perpetual unrest, the fatherland of crises, the nursery of quarrels among the nations.

In the political and social fields Europe is handing back this criticism with interest. America, it is said, isolates herself from the rest of the world and leaves it to bear its own burdens.<sup>44</sup> She founds the League of Nations and then abandons it. America conquers the Old World with money and "movies."

Religious criticism, hither and yon, is undoubtedly not as cutting as in politics and business. But just the same it wants to be heard. America believes it sees the death of the church in Europe. It sees a church that will not move, that is tied to the state, that wastes its time in theological discussions, while the house is burning. Europe, on the other hand, coins critical slogans like: "American activism," "religious sensationalism," and protests against being "missionized."

<sup>44</sup> Cf. the books of André Siegfried, Duhamel, Holitscher, Maurois, Oeri, Moeschlin.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

And so distance has been reëstablished after the first brotherly embrace, and this distance seems to be increasing perilously. In the present situation of World Protestantism, i.e., in its outlook for the future, in its work for peace and a new social order, in its defense against Roman imperialism, in its efforts to overcome secularism and bolshevism, probably nothing is so important as the understanding and the coöperation of the European and the American churches. It is, therefore, the more imperative that on both sides, the small and the larger church groups cling to their faith in one another, remain firm in their will to find an approach to one another, and patiently lay stone upon stone in the upbuilding of a deeper appreciation. The recognition of this danger and of this necessity will prevent our simply judging American church life from our own European standpoint.

It is equally difficult, however, to find a position in America so lofty as to render possible such an appraisal. Where should it be found in a country where everything is in a state of flux? The writer has, through numerous and extended travels during the last decade, come to know America in all of its different classes and churches. But at every visit America had a different appearance. This nation's tempo of living, as well as that of its churches, its philosophy, its keen consciousness of temporal existence, takes one's breath away. It permits of no static estimate. Only a flexible way of thinking is appropriate to these dynamics. Whoever views these changes of form from a static position will soon be

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

left behind. By means of a system of coördination only one may measure the condor's external path of flight, the series of points which make up the curve. To comprehend the flight itself, the tremendous dynamic force, the soaring over the summit, the plunge into the abyss—this requires a deeper sensing and a participation in the motion.”

We decline, therefore, to offer definite judgments from set positions and endeavor to sense from the situation of common distress what the problems are, and what are the questions and the ultimate realizations which strike us.

Only with this reservation is the attempt made here to interpret that which is so totally “different” in other people and other churches, and to draw into the somewhat ragged ruts of our Christian perception the richness and variety of their life.

### *A. The Church of Confessional Tradition*

Official church life in America, which has been divided into innumerable denominations, is uniform in this, that the majority of the churches refer back to

“ Since writing this book a somewhat different stage of the entire problem seems to have been reached—as far as it is possible to the writer to follow from a distance the incessant, rapid movement of American theology and church life. This seems evident from the theological symposium *A Conversation about God* in the *Christian Century* of this year from Wilhelm Pauck's book on Karl Barth and from *Contemporary American Theology*, which reached the author too late. He preferred, instead, to leave a definite picture as it appeared to a European observer at a given moment, especially since the entire plan of this book is less concerned with a detailed study than with a view of the whole movement from a common perspective.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

a historical, confessional origin and therefore wish to remain rooted in their historical tradition. Be it Puritanism or Anglicanism, Methodist faith or Baptist, Congregationalism or Presbyterianism—there is given in each instance a static element consisting of a confession, a definite ecclesiastical form and constitution. This historical form has coined in the various churches an individuality of life and piety which is unmistakable. To preserve this confessional character, this attitude toward life, and thereby to conquer new fields of life and power, and to pass this heritage on to the coming generation—this is largely the endeavor of this church life. It seeks to repeat history and therefore acts more and more anachronistically in a world where everything is in a state of flux.

And yet, even today, the great religious mass of the American people is still rooted in this rigid or softening confessionalism. According to the last census \*\* (just to give a few figures) there were, in 1926, two hundred thirty-two thousand local churches with, officially, fifty-five million members, which probably represent about seventy-five million Protestants, according to the way of figuring of the various churches, and about two million ecclesiastical officers.

The church throws its tremendous influence much more weightily into the balances of political and so-

\*\* Luther Fry, *America Looks Towards Its Churches*, 1930. In this connection compare also the standard work of W. A. Brown, *The Church in America*, Macmillan, 1922.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

cial decisions than European churches can do. The activity of this confessional church in foreign and home missions, in social work, Sunday schools, and church work, is a gigantic spiritual and religious stream, a veritable Niagara, which springs from American sources, the falls of which are even today setting in motion the greatest moral and religious forces.

This apparently static confessionalism, bound by its original forms, is not, however, immobile. It seems indeed as though every church were moving about its ideal or historical center like the planets about the sun. At the same time, however, the entire "solar system" of American confessionalism is moving with terrific speed toward unknown distances, being pulled along by the feverish unrest and the whirlpool of a disorientated time. Even though individual churches are holding ever so desperately to the old traditions, the American spirit is moving on and seeking new territory.

Fundamentalism <sup>\*\*</sup> is endeavoring to check <sup>\*\*</sup> this disquieting movement. But it is determined by fear rather than by an effort to hold up or even stop the new movement. It cried out to the rushing world like Joshua to sun and moon: "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon." But neither sun nor moon did stand still and today the movement has already passed its peak.

<sup>\*\*</sup> Cole, *History of Fundamentalism*.

<sup>\*\*</sup> Machen, *What is Faith?*

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

The cry of Fundamentalism was a cry for help, rather than help itself. The Fundamentalist reaction was more of an effort to get back to origins than a re-building of the old confessional church life to meet present conditions. It correctly sensed the fact that there was danger in delay, that the modern trend was heading toward an abyss. But it possessed neither ideas of its own, nor sufficient spiritual strength to compel a halt. Instead, it revived the old supernaturalism, the "fundamentals" of the old orthodoxy, the infallibility of the Bible, the virgin birth, faith in miracles, redemption by the blood of Christ, and offered them as a sure cure, acting so naively and with such hostility to cultural values, that even the justifiable element in its warning was not heard.<sup>11</sup>

American confessionalism persists, therefore, in a state of rapid flux. It is searching for a new theological, ecclesiastical and social orientation without really knowing where to find it. Bible, dogma, confession, experience, social programs no longer furnish definite standards for the masses. They are like stars that have fallen to earth, whereas they can only give light and guidance as long as they are in the heavens.

The sudden drop in membership, which has aroused attention in most churches during recent years, is only an external sign of a deeper conflict between the traditional church life and the present religious consciousness of America.

In spite of all that, confessionalism is still ac-

<sup>11</sup> Machen, *The Virgin Birth*, New York.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

complishing an enormous piece of work in its foreign and home missions, in its social work and its influence upon public life. But we are not dealing here with ecclesiastical form, nor achievements, but with the spiritual attitude, the real religious problematics, which are characterized by the necessity of proclaiming the old message in a new way to a Christian world that is moving rapidly away from us.

### *B. American "This-worldly" Religion*

Under this caption much is drawn together that has its focus in the belief that religious seeking emanates from man, that religious experience is regarded as a basis, that the furtherance of human life, even though in the highest spiritual sense, is somehow essential, and in the fact that a relativistic scientific empiricism dominates all theological effort.

In its older form this religion of immanence is a translation into the American world of our European theology of experience and conscious piety. It is here that the American followers of Schleiermacher and Ritschl settled down. The Americanization of this theology has led to different conclusions, however, than those which were drawn in Europe.

A typical American expression of this was found, first of all, in the religious pragmatism of William James,<sup>100</sup> in which the value and truth of absolute ideas possessed meaning only as an "As if" and

<sup>100</sup> *The Will to Believe*, 1897, *Pragmatism*, 1906, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 1901.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

then only in their utility and capacity for being tested. To establish and compare the effectiveness of these general ideas may be a task of the psychology of religion, which is arousing great hopes in America,<sup>101</sup> but its truth is a different story. Whenever pragmatism speaks of God, it can only be of "a finite God," who is truth as far as He is an obeyed influence, and not the sovereign Lord of earth and man,<sup>102</sup> who is altogether independent of man.

The empiricists<sup>103</sup> are conscious of the fact that this life does not originate out of itself but in God, yet one must not begin with God, but with experience. God is the "infinitely valuable part of reality, which gives us life," he is "the infinitely valuable being, in whose service man may acquire the greatest measure of life and the strongest personality he is capable of." Religious life consists, therefore, in our living with this Reality, testing it, applying it, in order to find the greater God, who confronts us in the infinity of reality.<sup>104</sup> The nature of this Reality, therefore, corresponds entirely to our own nature. When the American students tried to define God at the study-conference at Cologne, they said in essence that God is identical with the best which man bears in himself. This practically turns out to be religious

<sup>101</sup> Cf. the works of Coe, *Psychology of Religion*, 1923.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Abel Burckhardt—*Moderne Stromungen, Zeitschrift fuer Theologie und Kirche*, 1927.

<sup>103</sup> Primarily Harry Nelson Wiemann.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. *Fuehrerdienst*, January-February, 1931.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

Positivism, a disappearing of God behind our religious experience, which at best can be expanded. "Experience" becomes *experiment*—a higher, spiritual technique.

The new theology of experience, as Harry Emerson Fosdick, for instance, preaches it,<sup>105</sup> contains a strong ethical factor. God, or the experience which we have of Him, is a power which must continually be translated into ethical service. This ethical authentication in human life is much more important than the ontological justification. The essence of religion is therefore an ever-renewed act of self-surrender in the service of others.

The complete secularization of Christianity is realized in humanism. Here it is completely changed into a resolutely immanent religion, regardless of whether one starts out with scientific facts or from the immediate experience of life; man is the standard, his life is of central significance, life is valuable, religion is to be recognized as a phenomenon of life and to be tested by its value for life.

This religious empiricism and humanism has to a large part already deteriorated into religious nihilism or "behaviorism,"<sup>106</sup> which is only concerned with ways of conduct. For it the reality of God is no longer necessary. Man is only studied and valued according to his practical behavior; this is, therefore, a religious

<sup>105</sup> Fosdick, *Service, Meaning of Prayer*, et al.

<sup>106</sup> *Behaviorism—a Symposium*. Student Christian Movement, 1930.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

and ethical positivism, which limits its vision to the action and reaction of man.<sup>107</sup>

In this development the strong scientific and cultural influences, which have approached theology from the outside and which have overcome and choked the inner powers of the spirit, have wrought havoc. Christian theology simply succumbed, partly to faith in science, partly to psychology, partly to purely pragmatical considerations, and lost its independence. It became cosmic optimism, psychology of religion, or practical ethics. This process of dissolution as it was promoted by Walter Lippmann<sup>108</sup> or John Dewey,<sup>109</sup> excludes every supranaturalism, every objective idea, every seeking after truth which is not experiment, and thereby transforms religion into cultural history.

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A new theism opposes this secularization and destruction of Christianity. Visser 't Hooft points out the struggle which has lately begun between Theism and Humanism. Theism, today, is more concerned, however, with the question whether there is a God at all, and who He is, than with a conscious biblical answer. It still considers the "test" by which God proves himself capable of experience, instead of His self-revelation.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. the American volume of the *Student World*, 1930.

<sup>108</sup> *Preface to Morals.*

<sup>109</sup> *Human Nature and Conduct*, 1924.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

From a different angle Frank Buchman is endeavoring to effect in academic youth a reaction against this terrestrial religion. His movement, without any philosophical and methodical discussions, starts out with the basic facts of the Reformation (Buchman is really a Lutheran). It begins with sin and grace, in order to achieve the religious renewal of life by the formation of a new type of association and by a new evangelistic activity, i.e., the movement as such concerns itself but little with theological problems.

This group, "The First Century Fellowship Movement," has, however, greatly neglected theological problems compared with those of pastoral care, of life-changing and fellowship. Emil Brunner, who joined the group, warned them therefore not to remain "theological gipsies."

The danger of a complete commitment of Christianity to this world, be it by surrender to science, or to pure experience, to pragmatism, humanism or behaviorism, is recognized today. The most prominent leaders of confessional as well as modernistic Christianity,—W. A. Brown, Bishop McConnell, S. Parkes Cadman, Reinhold Niebuhr, and others—have raised warning voices.<sup>110</sup> But as to the choice of weapons for combating this secularization—Fundamentalism, Theism,<sup>111</sup> Revivalism or Barthianism—there is no clarity. Erich Stange<sup>112</sup> describes impressively the

<sup>110</sup> Behaviorism—a Battle Line. Cf. also articles in the religious press and addresses at Synods.

<sup>111</sup> Student World, July, 1930.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Fuehrerdienst, January, 1931.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

profound helplessness of American youth, "which sees the damage, but doesn't know where to begin," since it is still seeking the remedy in "this" world.

### C. *Christianity of a Social Idealism*

One is not fair to the American "Social Gospel"-Christianity, if one simply rejects <sup>113</sup> it as "American activism," a busy-ness void of all faith, in contrast with an eschatological expectancy, which leaves it all to God. The "Social Gospel" had its origin in a critique of existing piety and also in a religious inspiration.<sup>114</sup> From the understanding of the biblical doctrine of the Kingdom of God, the idealistic abridgment of prevalent dogmatical Christianity was recognized on the one hand, and on the other a new Christian ideal of fellowship and a social ethics was perceived.

The doctrine of the Kingdom of God was discovered anew by Christian-Social Idealism, which used it at once in combination with the modern doctrine of evolution as its leading theological idea. It is not an eschatological entity, but enters into an historical movement and into human experience, even into the later democratic development and into the inner world of the soul.<sup>115</sup> God thereby draws near to us

<sup>113</sup> Bornhausen, *Der christliche Aktivismus Nordamerikas in der Gegenwart*, Giessen, 1925.

<sup>114</sup> Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Gospel*.—Cf. also *Theological Background of the Social Gospel*, by Visser 't Hooft.

<sup>115</sup> Rufus Jones, *The World Within*.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

as "the Great Companion," and bestows upon us, through our coöperation with Him, a happy optimism. For the world can be transmuted by the application of the social ideals of the Gospel, and the Gospel's power to assert itself must become evident by this transmutation. Its real test, the truth of dogma, is "social efficiency."<sup>116</sup>

To this optimism we owe the enormous development of the social work of American Christianity. The world was not only to be evangelized in one generation, but also socially transformed. This implies a tremendous appeal to one's will, but immediately there also becomes evident the exaggeration of it in the demand to bring about the Kingdom of God by one's own endeavor or achievement. Christian Europe was positively startled when an American speaker at the Stockholm Conference (Dr. Wishart), with unsuspecting confidence, threw this thought into the eschatological thought-world of the Europeans for the first time and did it as though it were highly self-evident.

This early optimism ran down relatively soon. This too-confident social idealism had to be enlightened by hard facts. The confidence in being able to change the world through the social activity of the church is being followed by a certain sobering, without giving up the newly gained social knowledge. It has become doubtful to many whether the social activity of the church can save the world at all. Sher-

<sup>116</sup> *Christian Century*, January 21, 1931.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

wood Eddy became a socialist because he despised of the church.

Others, like the Christian socialists, Harry Ward, Reinhold Niebuhr, Kirby Page, Bishop McConnell, and the magazine *The World Tomorrow*, are about to correct this Christian-Social Idealism, to forget all Kingdom-of-God phantasies, to demand thoroughgoing critical labor, and to tackle concrete problems, like capitalism, unemployment, imperialism and militarism, in a practical way. This is not done with the hope of being able to accomplish an immediate essential change, but in the conviction that they are facing direct practical demands which the Christian conscience cannot evade. The Gospel is taken seriously as social criticism, as the challenge to social upbuilding in concrete situations, without illusion and naïve self-confidence, in the belief that the impetus thereto comes from God Himself, who must be "the guarantor of social ethics," and that we are "God's husbandry."

The tremendous extent and world-wide implications of the social problem have become sufficiently evident so that this excellent social realism impels toward a general, international, Christian union in service. Out of this distress a way is opened, leading to the Ecumenical Movement, which will be treated in the last chapter.

### D. *The Discussion*

This survey of traditional ecclesiasticism, the this-worldly religion, the Christian-Social Idealism,

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

and the reaction to them, demonstrates how rapidly American Christianity is drifting toward the same religious crisis as Europe. The consciousness of it is peering out through all the cracks in these systems. This is betrayed less by the denominational church papers and theological magazines than by the great youth conferences, the interdenominational press, the social study groups, pastoral meetings for discussion, such as took place recently in Delaware, when the entire situation was glaringly illumined in a debate between Mackay and Knudson.<sup>111</sup> One glance at the *Christian Century* and the *World Tomorrow* reveals a profound anxiety concerning the meaning of religion today. Prominent ecclesiastical leaders, like Dean Luther Weigle of Yale University, speak openly of "our present paganism," and one of the most influential younger leaders, Reinhold Niebuhr, Professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York, speaks of the "tragic aspect" of the present American state of mind, of which American liberalism particularly is too little conscious.

The underlying factors of the crisis are precisely those features which appeared as conscious strength, as a true and sublime calling, as surpassing charisma, viz., American activism, the impatient missionary spirit, the superlative unsurpassability, the experimenting psychological sense, and the power of organization. There is a growing recognition that the salvation of the world does not lie in this activism, that it cannot be evangelized in this generation, that

<sup>111</sup> According to the *Christian Century*, July 15, 1931.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

“efficiency” has its limitations and dangers not only outwardly, but also inwardly, that psychology leads to the dissolution of the life of the spirit and that over-organization becomes a menace to every spiritual movement.

The force of these observations is enhanced by the increasing desertion of the church,<sup>110</sup> by the decline of mission work and decreasing number of accessions to the church,<sup>111</sup> by the new orientation of American youth, and by the increasing lawlessness in consequence of Prohibition. America is also reaching that limit where some day a great introversion will begin, a turning and returning to God, who is a dangerous unknown and from whom His creatures cannot escape, either by cosmology, or by a humanitarian expansion of their own ego, or by social “efficiency.”

When that limit has been reached, the questions raised by Barthian theology ought to gain admission. Interest in it has already been awakened. The English translations of Barth’s and Brunner’s books are being read. Birch Hoyle’s presentation, for instance, was mentioned as among the “best sellers.” Petersmann points out emphatically in *Christliche Welt* that Barthianism “has found a relatively serious con-

<sup>110</sup> “We are rapidly becoming an unchurched people”—*Christian Century*, January 21, 1931.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. also the poor increase of only 88,350 new church members against 242,748 in 1929 and over a million in 1928, to which the church statistician of the *Christian Herald*, Dr. Kieffer, has pointed recently.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

sideration in view of the fact that the stars are unpropitious." Withal there still exists, to be sure, much sensationalism in regard to Karl Barth, whom "God has let loose upon the world," much theological curiosity and objective consideration from the spectator's point of view, much hasty depreciation of that which is difficult to understand as "post-war theology and theology of the inflation period." Barth is also easily rendered innocuous as a "European fundamentalist," or as one who unnecessarily smashes much ecclesiastical earthenware and furniture.<sup>120</sup>

More serious are the protests which originate in the true motivating powers of American Protestantism, the Pelagianism of the Social Gospel, Methodism's triumphant consciousness of salvation, or the obstinacy of an uncritical confessionalism. The historical association without which Barth cannot be entirely understood is still lacking. Barth and Brunner imply such a negation of everything that has so far been considered glorious and promising, that this theology is felt to be "destructive" and that Barth appears as a kind of religious "bolshevist." In the prevalent mental attitude there is still so much religious *vis inertiæ* that men who understand American religious life, like Niebuhr or Henry Sloane Coffin, both recognized leaders of theological youth at Union Theological Seminary in New York, cannot bring themselves to believe in a deeper influence of the Barthian theology upon Christian America, in spite of a per-

<sup>120</sup> Herman in the *Reformed Church Messenger*, June, 1931.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

sonal recognition of the critical and positive values of the Barthian theology.<sup>181</sup>

American theology primarily reacts in an ethico-activistic manner to the questioning of Barthianism and replies with the counter-question: What shall we do about it? Niebuhr cannot become reconciled to the fact that the socio-ethical motive is completely excluded in the Barthian theology in spite of its relationship to the religio-social circle of Blumhardt, Rauschenbusch, Ragaz and Kutter. Therefore Niebuhr, for his part, takes up the critique of Tillich. As long as this ethical activism has not spent itself and the relativistic dissolution of everything absolute has not landed in nihilism, the American fly-wheel is hard to stop. But even where American traditionalism is still active—to which Barthianism appears as being “neither fish nor fowl nor flesh” (since it cuts through all denominations and groups)—its time has evidently not come as yet. These hindrances and resistances are shown comprehensively in the latest work on Barthianism by Professor Zerbe.<sup>182</sup>

The fear of a too hasty dogmatizing, the fear of a synthesis of biblicism and agnosticism (Knudson in the *Methodist Review*, May, 1928), the fear of an injection of metaphysics into ethics, all this is typically American. “We need a period of metaphysical

<sup>181</sup> *Christian Century*, December 13, 1929.

<sup>182</sup> Zerbe, *The Karl Barth Theology or The New Transcendentalism*, Cleveland, 1931.—It is interesting to note the attitude of suspense in Professor Wilhelm Pauck's book, *Karl Barth. Prophet of a New Christianity?* Harper & Brothers, 1931.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

vacation," and Barth, the "hyper-Calvinist," will not grant it. According to Knudson the *proton pseudos* of this theology lies in its ontological dialectics; it is permeated by positivism and scepticism so that "faith has no anchor."

Alongside of much misunderstanding and lack of understanding, alongside of the attitude of the disinterested bystander, we find this same clash in America between two strange spiritual powers which causes them to fly apart at once, because at this point of contact there seems at the present time to be no possibility of an understanding.

Nevertheless, a more profound attentiveness may be noted. There are four points at which the new theology might begin its questioning. One is not so much that of Fundamentalism <sup>128</sup> itself as the concern that lies in it, namely the zeal for the preservation of the purity of the divine Word and the obligation toward an entrusted message. These circles must be receptive to the Barthian insistence upon the old-orthodox positions. A fundamentalist like Machen, who has written a scientific book on the Virgin Birth, will be glad to discover the importance which this dogma receives in Barth's *Dogmatik*. The question is only this, whether there is not a spirit active in Fundamentalism which believes it *possesses* the Word in spite of its submission to it, and which because of this certainty is far removed from that spirit of "cheerful

<sup>128</sup> Stewart Cole, *History of Fundamentalism*, Richard Smith, 1931.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

desperation" as the Barthian theology proclaims it. Nevertheless, American fundamentalists have actually started the pilgrimage to Bonn and Zurich.

A second point of contact would lie in the more mobile part of American Lutheranism, if this did not consider itself as being simply the conservator of an historical, unaffected confessionalism, if it were not hindered by a continual dread of possible agreement and theological flexibility, and if it were not at the same time succumbing to a progressive de-Germanizing.<sup>184</sup> This may be observed not only in America but also at the Lutheran world conferences, where individual Americans gravely warned their European brethren against the perilous liveliness and flexibility of Continental Lutheranism, for which there is little sympathy among American Lutherans.

Still, it was just the American Lutherans who did not betray the Gospel of the Reformation to the Social Gospel and to activism. They have preserved a lively awareness of what the Reformation was all about, even though they see it quite often with a confessional bias.

A third promising point of contact is that theism, which is presented in Walter Horton's *Theism*, in its struggle with the scientific spirit. This theism faces the results and implications of modern science and realizes the seriousness of the perilous reality with which present natural science, sociology and

<sup>184</sup> Petersmann frequently laments this fact in the *Christliche Welt*, 1930-31.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

psychology confront Christianity. But it also knows how all immanence-religion threatens the essential character of Christianity. Therefore, it endeavors to place the reality of the personal, transcendent God, which is perceptible by experience, over against these realities of science, and somehow to bring this faith into harmony with the demands of scientific reason. The contention between science and faith controls the greater part of recent theological thought in America today and is attended by that typical American hope that a synthesis must be effected which will satisfy faith as well as the cultural consciousness.

A fourth point of contact is to be found where American Activism is beginning to grow weary and where even Confessionalism is seeking a new message for a new time. The individuals, who surmise the coming revulsion, speak out unequivocably, as, for instance, Robert Speer, who, as he reviews his life's work, confesses that we cannot go on as heretofore, that a new way must be found.<sup>188</sup> In this connection, the atmosphere at the World Conference of the Young Men's Christian Association, which took place in Toronto and in Cleveland in the summer of 1931, was very instructive. A change seems to have taken place not only in their political judgment of Germany, but also, as Rev. D. Koechlin, Vice-President of the Association, reported from first impressions, an antithesis between Barthian theology and humanistic, scientific theology was noticeable through-

<sup>188</sup> Cf. Stange in *Fuhrerdienst*, January-February 1931.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

out the discussions of the Conference, now latently, and again openly. The spiritual life of the Y. M. C. A. may be accepted as a barometer of the flexible, religious thought of America much more than for that of Europe. It is no longer the Social Gospel which stands in the center of interest of Christian youth, nor is it the missionary task, nor the race question, but "the adventure of youth with God." With this they are going back to the central question, namely that concerning the reality of God. In doing this they are being strongly influenced by European leaders of the movement, like Strange, or by friends of the Barthian theology like Visser 't Hooft or the Scotsman Mackay.

In the conflict between humanistic-scientific and Barthian thought the present mental tension between Europe and America found partial expression, although this dividing line does not lie between continents but rather between spiritual attitudes. It was significant that the most prominent leaders of the Christian East, such as the Chinese Koo and the Indian Rallia Ram did not side with the humanistic-scientific theology, but defended the transcendental message of Christianity along with the Continentals. It was equally significant that the most esteemed leader of the former generation of youth, John Mott, several times expressly referred to the Barthian theology in a radio address to all America, with a fine realization that the generations are changing. But so far there are only a few individuals who

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

have had the courage to take up something new and who dare to name it. Such groups may expect the turn of the tide from a re-discovery of the old truths of the Reformation, and from personal evangelism, as represented respectively by Barth and by Buchman, both of whom agree in focusing their attention on the old conception of sin and grace, however widely they may differ in other respects. They feel that this original Gospel of salvation for sinners will be the saving ark which will still be afloat when the highest peaks of American pragmatism, science, humanism, religious education and behaviorism will long have been covered by the heavy tides of a spiritual deluge.

In this situation, however, it is highly necessary that American Protestantism refrain from simply looking for a new slogan, a new school, a new theological formula, new practical advice by which it may again build up something with the old "efficiency." We must rather look for a genuine renewal of the whole from God, a new becoming instead of a new doing, and this indeed must proceed from the original Gospel.

Among the individuals who know this, we must count President Richards of the Reformed College at Lancaster. In the *Reformed Church Messenger* he speaks of "the fluttering in the theological dove coop and in the whole world" which has been caused by Barth and Brunner. He points out the great liberation which American Protestantism may experi-

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

ence through this theology, a liberation from its utilitarianism and biological pragmatism, from modernism and its confidence in science which leaves no room for divine revelation; a liberation also from traditional dogmatism, evolutionism, and a false theology of immanence, from biblical literalism, confessionalism, moralism and pietistic emotionalism.

We observe a similar attitude of attention, in an article by L. Matthews Sweet in the *Biblical Review*,<sup>126</sup> where he likens his first impression of Barth to being struck directly between the eyes by a particularly heavy mallet, wielded by a particularly heavy hand. Here the prophetic element of the new message is primarily realized, the insufficiency of all previous shibboleths, and the unequivocal demand of a whole generation.

An American Barthian literature is beginning to develop.<sup>127</sup> By these transmissions and introductions Barthianism is threatened with the peril of being translated too well into American life and thought, of being transmitted and utilized too well and of suffering violence from the spirit of America, which is so strongly inclined to assimilation. This is especially true since only through rationalizing, through intellectual simplification and adaptation, does the marked abstraction of Barthian thought become comprehensible to the empirical, more naïve, American think-

<sup>126</sup> Quoted by Petersmann in the *Christliche Welt*, 1930.

<sup>127</sup> Douglas Horton, *The Word of God*, Pilgrim Press, 1928; and the recent books of W. Lowrie and W. Pauck.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

ing. This Americanizing is not to be rejected as such, since Barthian theology has arisen out of a European situation and therefore still carries with it the shell of European thought. Petersmann expressly demands such "thorough transmission into foreign thought-worlds," whereas Barth has already stated that Jesus could pass even through closed doors. In this respect Brunner's book and presentation is closer to the American understanding.<sup>188</sup> Petersmann calls it a masterpiece in establishing new contacts, which first enters into the possibilities of an understanding already existing in Fundamentalism and Modernism, and then strikes through in critical analysis to the problem of revelation, of salvation and of the Kingdom of God.

Even individual opponents like Knudson, with all their criticism of details, yet emphasize the value of such mediation and recognize that this message has again rendered theology vital and man small, and that theology has again found the right point of departure in revelation and in the sovereignty of God.

Such voices are the first indications of an imminent change in the spiritual condition of America. At the same time they prepare the ground on which the discussion between Europe and America is to take place.

Europe and America are meeting each other at various points of issue today, in missions, the work among youth, the ecumenical movement, and social work. The Youth Conference at Toronto and Cleve-

<sup>188</sup> Brunner, *Theology of Crisis*, Scribner's Son, New York, 1929.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

land is a strong indication of it. This discussion between Europe and America belongs to the great world problems of contemporary Protestantism, but one always has the feeling that an understanding cannot be reached by scratching the surface of these fields of endeavor but only by transferring the conflicts to deeper levels, i.e., by digging deeper into that stratum where the concern is no longer about Europe and America, about ecclesiastical differences and psychological differentiations, and theological schools, but about man, who is nothing but the creature standing before God and hoping to find grace in Him. It is the problem of our deepest distress, of God's cause which becomes our common and real concern.<sup>120</sup>

Since this chapter was written in the German edition of this book, American theology has come to closer grips with the new theology. The old denominational theology feels deeply the conflict between the desire to keep the old heritage unaltered and the necessity of reaching the ear of a new generation with the old truth in a new form adapted to mod-

<sup>120</sup> For literature regarding this chapter compare Abel Burckhardt's "Moderne Stroemungen" in *Zeitschrift fuer Theologie und Kirche*, 1927, in *Student World* 1, 1931. Also John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, New York. Lippmann, *A Preface to Morals*, Macmillan.—*A Symposium* (on Behaviorism) S. C. M.—W. A. Brown, *Beliefs that Matter*, Assoc. Press.—Eustace Haydon, *The Quest of the Ages*, Harpers.—R. Niebuhr, *Does Civilization Need Religion?* Macmillan.—The numerous books of H. Fosdick.—F. P. Miller and Helen D. Mill, *Giant of the Western World*.—H. H. Wieman, *Wrestle of Religion with Truth*, Macmillan.

## BARTHIANISM THROUGH THE CHURCHES

ern psychology and science. Modernist theology in its various forms has, at least partly, gone so far in its attempt to assimilate the evangelical message to the modern mind that the original authentic Gospel as a transcendent message is adulterated with foreign elements of human idealism, a philosophical relativism and a shallow pragmatism. The well-known controversy in the *Christian Century* between Wiesman, Macintosh and Otto—as well as the Laymen's Missionary Report in *Rethinking Missions*—is very illuminating in regard to a religious situation in which Christian theology no longer takes its point of departure from the fact of divine revelation but from an inquiry into the philosophical condition of religious experience and in practical requirements.

Recent social theology, on the other hand, as in Niebuhr's new book *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, has lost its former faith in the idealistic form of the social gospel, in the redeeming power of social theories and programs. It admits to a certain despair concerning the efficiency of mere conference methods and a theoretical “revisionist” socialism and is prepared, as is the Frenchman Sorel, to give a place to the element of violence in the historic process of the transformation of society. The theory of communism is therefore entering the field of theological discussion, especially among students.

Besides these theological and sociological aspects of a rapidly changing situation, the end of prosperity, the failure of capitalism, the sudden exchange of

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

democratic for dictatorial methods, the disappointing results of the huge social experiment of prohibition, the inefficiency of educational methods in the struggle against crime, have contributed toward weakening the optimistic and humanistic self-assurance of a great nation with its untapped reserves; and the failure of the international conferences on disarmament, unemployment, and economics has strengthened very widely the conviction that the world cannot solve its own worldly problems by worldly methods. Humanity is, therefore, again on the lookout for other transcending forces and the Christian church sees a new opportunity to announce its divine message to a despairing world.

These general conditions may open a way toward a deeper understanding of the real concern of Barthian theology. It may be that a synthesis between the dogmatics of this theology on the one hand and the warmth of the personal evangelism of the Oxford Group Movement on the other hand may be more accessible to the American mind as the new word for the time than either of these new messages by itself.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CONTROVERSY WITH ROMAN CATHOLICISM

DURING the four hundred years of disputation between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism four methods were employed by the two spiritual powers: the Inquisition, the Anathema, practical competition and mutual questioning.

The way of the Inquisition, the stake, and the dragonnades, has been given up. For the most part, force is attempted today only in more benighted countries, and there only in the form of political pressure, social boycott and ostracism.

The literary and ecclesiastical conflict hitherto prevalent was largely controlled by the Anathema, and by condemnatory polemics, without any attempt to understand the opponent. There was much hatred in these polemics, even as there was formerly in the days of the Inquisition. It was poured out into historical dissertations such as those of Denifle and Grisar, as well as into the literature and the sermons of both confessions. This hatred has today been done away with by nobler men and has been replaced by an opposition that is at least frank and clear.

The third method of conflict takes place in prac-

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

tical competition, in social work and charity, in missions, in the schools, through influence upon public opinion, and particularly in politics. In this way success, power and personal welfare easily become proofs of the truth of a confession. This competition also has its noble side, however, in the endeavor to bring about the highest achievement which the spirit of a confession is able to realize.

The conflict entered into a new phase with the coming of Barthianism. It begins with a question from out of the depths of a cause common to both, out of a matter of mutually grave concern. It puts this question to the other church and is willing that the opponent turn the question back upon itself. It even declares itself ready to abandon all judging for the present and for the time being to utilize the mutual discussion solely as an urge to reflection.

This new treatment of the entire problem was begun by Barthianism in the famous article by Karl Barth,<sup>1</sup> without, however, calling forth a similar answer from the Catholics.

Nevertheless, the discussion is in full swing. It is differentiated from all former attempts in that it does not begin with individual points of conflict, but posits the question from an ultimate center, from out of the innermost heart of the God-relationship, and it does not endeavor to convict the opponent, nor to gain a theological or ecclesiastical advantage, but concerns itself solely with the God-relationship, which

<sup>1</sup> *Zwischen den Zeiten*, 1928.

## CONTROVERSY WITH ROMAN CATHOLICISM

includes the opponent also. A peculiar change of mind attaches to this new method of dispute. The former style of controversy was accompanied by an unmistakable note of hatred or at least of intolerance, and took place essentially in the sphere of intellectual and dogmatical discussion, with a consciousness of victory vibrating through it secretly or openly. Or else a certain hopelessness pervaded such discussions, a resignation, as, for instance, both Przywara and Archbishop Soederblom admitted after the latter's lecture at the University of Munich.\*

In the conflict that has begun between Roman Catholicism and Barthian theology a new emotional tone is apparent in the trends of thought. To be sure, the Roman Catholic Church has not heard such tones from the Protestant side for a long time,—such willingness to give recognition, to achieve appreciation, as for instance, in the articles by Erwin Reisner in *Zwischen den Zeiten*, where he expressly states the purpose of his writing to be the revision of the relation to the Roman Catholic Church. However, one cannot say, in this case either, that the Roman Catholic Church had reciprocated to the same degree. But a nobility of expression and a friendliness of disposition, such as the Protestant church has not heard since the days of Wessenberg, has become noticeable. It is possible among the leaders to attribute an altogether different disposition to an opponent because of such expressions, without being tempted to interpret it as

\* Przywara, *Ringen der Gegenwart*, 1929.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

mere politeness. One detects in these debates<sup>\*</sup> by Przywara, Pribilla, Guardini, Adam, Gezenyi, Muench, and Grosche, something like a real concern about the salvation of the opponent's soul, and an endeavor to give the glory to God and to His truth. In the new situation we must credit one another with such a feeling of concern, even though there is a catch in many a harmless question and a bitter pill in many a friendly remark.

At any rate the Barthian theology has met with a consideration on the part of Roman Catholicism (especially by Przywara and Grosche) such as Protestant theology has not experienced for a long time. The Barthian question has been acknowledged as a Roman Catholic possibility, even though the answer is not acceptable. Karl Barth has even been claimed by individual Catholics because he manifests a "joyfulness" which is characteristic of Catholicism.<sup>†</sup> Barth's manner of stating the problem, which so closely approximates to Roman Catholicism, has also

<sup>\*</sup> For this chapter compare: Przywara, *Ringen der Gegenwart*, 1929. Cf. also *Zwischen den Zeiten*, 3, 1929.—Pribilla, *Um die kirchliche Einheit*.—Guardini, *Der Gegensatz*.—Adam, *Wesen des Katholizismus*.—Gezenyi, in the April number of the *Katholischer Gedanke*, 1931.—Muench, *ibidem*.—Grosche, *Der Kolosserbrief*, 1926.—Cf. also *Augustinus und die dialektische Theologie* (Akad. Bonifatius-Korrespondenz 45, 2). Also in lectures on *Die neuere protestantische Theologie und der Katholizismus*, which will appear in the new *Zeitschrift fuer Kontrovers-theologie Catholica*, according to a statement by its publisher.

<sup>†</sup> Cf. *Hochland*, 1921/1, 1923. Przywara, *Relig. philosophie kath. Theologie*, 1926. *Ringen der Gegenwart*, 1929.

## CONTROVERSY WITH ROMAN CATHOLICISM

been observed and criticized by Protestants. The emphasis on objectivity, the exclusion of all human subjectivism and individualism, the sole activity of God which comes close to the *opus operatum*, has been understood on both sides as a relationship to Roman Catholicism. "In the insistence on the objectivity of truth Catholic theology stands with Karl Barth against everything else."<sup>8</sup> But the essential point here is not the greater or lesser proximity to the Roman Catholic conception at individual points—we need not protest against such a proximity, since our treatment of the entire problem does not originate with the same polemical disposition nor is it threatened by the same dangers as existed in the sixteenth century. Without embarrassment we may emphasize and acknowledge the common possessions, the historical inheritance, the Roman Catholic Church's preservation of certain treasures, without thereby surrendering our own peculiar possessions or without falling victim to a characterless "Catholicophilism."

The significance of this discussion does not, therefore, lie in single points of conflict, but in the discovery of a decisive, basic question, to which all subordinate questions are referred, since they do not originate with ecclesiastical affiliation nor subjective arbitrariness, but with the question concerning God. This question is, by the way, not raised only in such debates. It is raised within each church by its own mem-

<sup>8</sup> *Lit. Welt*, 48, 1930.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

bers, not only in the Protestant but also in the Roman Catholic Church, as, for instance, in the beautiful hymns by Gertrud Lefort.\*

There has probably never been a Protestant theology heretofore which has permitted the Roman Catholic position to influence it so profoundly, and which in turn has judged it so entirely free from all polemical intentions with profound respect for its truly religious motives, which has nobly ignored everything secondary and has endeavored sincerely to talk only about a common concern, as has that of Karl Barth. For the sake of the cause he takes the Roman Catholic Church seriously as a question which the Protestant Church ought to face, immediately directing a counter-question to the Roman Catholic Church, however. How did it reply to this question? The Roman Catholic Church as such cannot answer because it cannot permit itself to be questioned. If it does reply, it is with the sentence, the index, the decision "*ex cathedra*"; "*Roma locuta, causa finita.*" It simply knows no discussion, for such could only take place between equals. The church judges, condemns, approves or remains silent, but it carries on no debates; at the most this is done by individual Roman Catholic theologians, who must risk the possibility of having to recant their replies to the Barthian questions.

In Germany a surprising number of able Roman Catholic theologians have entered into the debate.

\* *Hymnen an die Kirche*, Munich, 1924.

## CONTROVERSY WITH ROMAN CATHOLICISM

In some of the discussions one may even observe an approach, on the part of the Roman Catholics, to the style and argumentation of Barthian theology; this, of course, is done in order to grip it from the inside, so to say, and then to combat it. It is admitted first of all, however, that the original Protestantism has rediscovered itself here, and that old and buried religious truths, which Roman Catholicism possesses, have here been found anew.

The new quest for the church, the return to the old confessions, the demand for authority, the emphasis upon objectivity, appears to the Roman Catholics like a loan which Barthian theology has made from Roman Catholic theology. They rejoice in the hope that these discoveries may work further by their own innate logic and foster an appreciation for still other Catholic truths.

If Roman Catholics acknowledge the common front in the present struggle against the bolshevizing and secularizing of the world, and see in the "law of nature" a common basis for a sociological treatment of these problems, then a first step seems to have been taken by Barthian theology toward making common theological thought possible. This was prepared for and made possible by the turning away from "Culture-Protestantism" and Idealism, also from Kantian philosophy; it was made possible by the new philosophy of authority and the phenomenological view of reality (*Wesensschau*) which has gained an influence also in Protestant theology since Husserl

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

and Scheler, and especially through Heidegger; it was made possible by the demand of theology's primacy over science, by a psychological and practical justification of the Roman Catholic care of souls which, as Dr. Jung has established, comes to meet the needs of man infinitely more pedagogically and liberatingly than Protestantism, and essentially by the turning back from a scientific theology to a theology of faith.

But the discussion does not stop on the Roman Catholic side with the observation of such approaches. It avoids crushing the opponent with superior authority or a peremptory decree, but picks up the dialectical ball with great dexterity and flings it back again. Nor does it content itself with hurling around theological details or practical questions in its discussion with the new theology, but it seeks to bring out the antitheses, which in spite of all rapprochements are being realized clearly and sharply at their center, i.e., the concept of God.

This has been done primarily by Przywara, but also by Adam, Kiefl, and Pribilla. Przywara with a keen-edged knife lays bare the Barthian concept of God and measures it with the Roman Catholic standard. He understands it dialectically and also recognizes it in all the seriousness of its groping distress, and yet he rejects it in its essence because it increasingly substitutes for the absolute transcendence of God the absolute transcendence of the Irrational.

Seen from the side of the Roman Catholic the Bar-

## CONTROVERSY WITH ROMAN CATHOLICISM

thian God is not only the One distant from and superior to the world, but He is the Unknown, who becomes empty because of all this abstractness and hiddenness, whereas the Catholic concept of God as the *complexio oppositorum* comprises the entire fullness of world and life. Over against the only real God of the Barthians, who alone takes hold of all things and alone is active in all, the Roman Catholic Church places a God who also affirms His creation, who grants it a value of its own and a reality of its own, and who graciously permits it to enter into coöperation with Him. Thereby a synthesis is achieved in the tension between transcendence and immanence, a synthesis between "yes" and "no," an *analogia entis*, whereby God is in us as well as over us, inapproachable in His sublimity and yet entering into our nature and being, by His revelation and incarnation, the Creator in the creation, revealing Himself to it and also being separate from it. God is the "yes" to the creation. All fullness of content of this creation is a positive picture of God. This does not prevent Him from also uttering his "no" to His creation, from out of His sublimity and His transcendent holiness. But both are contained in a polarity and combined into a mysterious synthesis, the external form of which is the church. In place of the pure negation of the Barthian God we have this positive analogy among the Roman Catholics. "God sends forth His creation from His fullness, holds it balanced for a while in order to call it home again into

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

that fullness when the time is fulfilled." The world is, therefore, not only Godless, not only distant from God, not only the scene of demonism, but it remains God's realm and scene of action. The Roman Catholic concept of God does not deprecate the world and man, as Barthianism has been charged with doing, but maintains God and the world in a polarity that is recognized even though fraught with tension.

The Roman Catholic not only puts his concept of God over against the Barthian one, but also seeks to detach the Barthian concept of God from its own presuppositions. For if God is the only Real and only Active One, then the transcendence of the absolute God over us must finally change into an absolute God within us, and the rigidly proclaimed transcendence becomes a disguised immanence. The original Lutheran faith-experience which is not evaluated as an ontological, but as a circumstantial experience of consciousness, becomes dynamite to the one-sidedly emphasized transcendence, for this dissolution of self on the part of man leads, in the final analysis, to complete unity with God, which allows us to surmise the proximity of pantheism—a reproach which Barth has denied decisively as a misinterpretation. He has likewise rejected the misinterpretation of faith as a creative, religious experience.<sup>1</sup>

From the polarity of the *analogia entis*<sup>2</sup> not

<sup>1</sup> *Zwischen den Zeiten*, No. 3, 1929.

<sup>2</sup> *Zeitschrift fuer katholische Theologie*, 1, 1931. *Lehre von der Analogie des Seins*.

## CONTROVERSY WITH ROMAN CATHOLICISM

only the Barthian concept of God itself but also the relation to God, which is therewith implied, is criticized. Over against the radicalism of the "no," which characterizes this relationship with God for the Barthians, Przywara places the ethos of balance. Over against the divine wrath (which, according to Barth, alone is empirically accessible to us) he places the pleasure of God in His creature, even though it errs, a creature to whom He reveals Himself and whom He redeems. Over against the convulsive and ever-defensive attitude of the Barthian he holds the Roman Catholic attitude, which is free from restraint, his freedom from absolutistic mania, which permits him to seek "man's happy possibilities" in absolute relaxation. The Barthian relationship to God is continually threatened either by pantheism or by theo-pantheism. The Roman Catholic relationship to God lies well balanced in the center and, in the *analogia entis* presents the real, metaphysical *a priori* of Roman Catholicism. With the Barthians as well as with the Roman Catholics this relationship to God is, of course, constituted by grace.

But more subtle differences in the conception of grace Przywara sees in a brilliantly coined formula, namely in the contrast between the "sole efficaciousness" and the "all-efficaciousness" of grace. For the Roman Catholic grace works also in nature—*gratia naturam perficit*—and therefore also in natural man. By this presence of the all-efficacious grace man gains power for his own activity. It is not his own strength,

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

but the divine power of grace in him, which enables him to do the divine pleasure. Not for a moment is he forsaken by this grace. It is not hidden by a cloud of transcendence, but is effectively present in being, not only in faith, i.e., not only in his consciousness. It is to be understood ontologically and not psychologically as in Protestantism (which, of course, is a misunderstanding). This psychologism Przywara also finds in the complete negation of man before God. For this negation is also a cramped, psychological condition or act and is not at all like the quiet, objective existence of grace, which is placed over against the subjective act of faith.

The Barthian doctrine of the sole-efficaciousness of grace only seemingly dissolves human coöperation. For although all of man's own doing is denied, this assertion as such is in itself human doing, a pure assertion, which presumes to determine the objective being of God and the work of his grace and to determine it negatively. In the seemingly absolute humility and the nihilism of the Barthian man there is revealed a part of the Protestant "hybris" and at the same time that very highest type of religious self-activity, which the Barthians want to combat. The assertion of Schmidt-Japing is therefore acknowledged as correct. According to him, Barthian theology is a consistent idealism with negative prefixes, as Schumann<sup>\*</sup> has already pointed out. This hidden idealism is declared to be "alarmingly foreign

<sup>\*</sup> In *Gottesgedanke und Zerfall der Moderne*.

## CONTROVERSY WITH ROMAN CATHOLICISM

to the Bible" and especially is its exegesis censured on the basis of rich and concrete Bible knowledge such as, for instance, Deissmann's.

But Protestant subjectivism is also hidden in this disguised idealism. For since God is bound up decisively with man's salvation, He is drawn out of the sphere of the polarized existence into the simply human and even psychological sphere of faith; that is, He is hopelessly bound to man. The subjective human interest, the tragic factor of the Reformation and of its immanent theology therefore return to the foreground in spite of the exaggeration of transcendence.

By means of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the all-efficaciousness of grace, an ethical action is made possible, which is attuned to the divine will and which may, therefore, acquire merit. The Barthian insistence upon the sole-effectiveness of grace, on the other hand, paralyzes and empties the human will of the divine, which thus again becomes a law unto itself. It is evident how in a new form the old Pelagian conflict is again fought out.

The Barthian recognition of God and grace is not combated in itself, but in its one-sidedness, not because of its positive content, "but because of its negation and gesture of exclusiveness, which has its basis in the Lutheran postulate of the oneness of God and man." Roman Catholicism, on the other hand, is said to take creation seriously and is therefore able to uphold the creature in its polaric existence, even in its relative independence and, above all, in its indis-

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

soluble correlation to God and world, to society and to the individual.

The removal of the discussion to this central point has undoubtedly given the whole dispute between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism a more profound and concrete importance; and in disputation itself a new seriousness has appeared. In regard to the subject matter, the tension has simply been moved back from the outer positions of papacy, mass, hierarchy, and tradition into the real theological and religious center. There, however, the difference between an "existential" and an "ontological" view becomes evident. Here the counter-question, which Karl Barth has directed at the Roman Catholic Church, has certainly not been heard nor replied to as yet, however much food for thought and material for critical reflection may have been laid before Protestantism as a whole by this dispute.

Barthian theology and with it Protestantism, as a whole, recognize at once the concurrent errors in this Roman Catholic criticism of evangelical faith, even though it is done sympathetically. It rightly protests above all against the suggestion that the human subject, gripped by God, is the Protestant *petra*, over against which they place the objective and visible church as the Roman Catholic *petra*. It also protests against the misinterpretation of faith as a human creative, religious experience. It again presents to the Roman Church the basic concern of the Reformation as a counter-question, which has not yet

## CONTROVERSY WITH ROMAN CATHOLICISM

been replied to in the above Roman Catholic trends of thought.

This discussion will have to be continued at three points if that question is to be answered. In his well-known article on the distress of the Protestant church Karl Barth again points this out emphatically. The first one is the reflection upon the fact that the Christian church recognizes and proclaims a crucified Christ, but not a "Christ of really uncanny worldly vitality, a Christ as a powerfully organizing principle for the uplift of man into the sphere of the divine, continually visible and institutionally real, no longer a humble Christ and hiding his divinity, but a Christ of glory; a glory, which can be apprehended directly, documented historically, experienced psychologically and physiologically, which can be transmitted and documented even juridically and politically."

Furthermore, in so far as this Christ is recognized as the free Lord and not as the "immanent principle of his Church," as "the really heavenly head of his really earthly body," the Roman Catholic Church is asked whether it is not committed to a dangerous self-assertion over against God and Christ. If "a continuity between divine and human activity" is demonstrated and even a sort of a reciprocity—must not the divine Lord of the Church recede behind the representation by the Church and by the earthly stewards of the heavenly gift in spite of all the glamour attributed to Him? If the Crucified, the heavenly and hidden Lord of the church, is offered directly and con-

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

cretely in the church's gifts and functions "as a mere sublime part of its own reality," if He is offered as actually present, administered, visible and to be "enjoyed"—is this not the most dangerous possible obliteration of the boundaries between God and man? Does it not claim to give something here which Christ alone can give? Is not Dostoievski right with the terrible warning of his Grand-Inquisitor against this attempt of the church to assert itself over against God? Here is the basis of the rejection, on principle, of every "ecclesiastical assurance of the God-relationship" and also of the conscious abjection to expressing grace as concrete reality. Barthian theology would suffer neither a philosophical, nor a religious, nor an ethical, nor an ecclesiastical "transfiguration" of man and opposes all such claims without any illusions. For even "the Church has fallen into the Babylonian captivity of the demoniac powers of the world."

Finally, the Barthian reply, which is expected also to act as a question, points to the difference between a purely ontological and an existential way of thinking. Dare the church only proclaim and establish the objectivity of the heavenly revelation and the salvation it brought, without considering itself challenged thereby and taken to account, judged and forgiven? May it simply repeat the sacrifice of Christ like an objective fact, without dying with Him anew each time? Dare it simply offer a "conclusive knowledge, a simple direction" without any fear and with an easy

## CONTROVERSY WITH ROMAN CATHOLICISM

conscience as its objectively assured possession, and remain in the static of an established, completed synthesis of the divine and the human? Must it not rather realize that it has itself been placed into the dynamics of an existential relationship to God, of which it must constantly give account?

If one compares these questions with the controversy of former centuries, which were heatedly concerned with the mass and with papacy, one will appreciate that the point in question is still the same concern as that of the Reformation, even though the religious and the psychological motivation have been shifted and the questions are mutually put to each other with a new inter-confessional courtesy.

Because these questions of Barthian theology are not only addressed to the Roman Catholic, but also to the Protestant Church, they lose their polemical character and become simply a call to repentance to every church which claims to be anything else than a church of pardoned sinners.

The lack of any of the ordinary prejudices which were so frequent in the Catholic-Protestant controversy, the *courtoisie* in the mutual discussion of the new theological problems, the prominent place which Barth gives in his studies to scholastic theologians like Thomas Aquinas and Anselm of Canterbury,<sup>10</sup> the new emphasis which Barth laid on a theology of authority and especially the conversion to Roman Catholicism of various theologians like Peterson and

<sup>10</sup> In Barth's *Fides Quærens Intellectum*.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

Bauhofer were responsible for the reproach made especially by Wobbermin that Barthianism was a way toward Rome. Barth has vehemently repudiated such an insinuation and declared recently that he considers the Roman Church as the greatest heresy of Christian history; especially her doctrine of the *analogia entis* and of the *Imago Dei*, i.e., her attempt to interpret human life as an analogy to the divine, and the fallen man as still representing the image of God in the original creation.

## CHAPTER VI

### BARTHIANISM AND THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

THE Ecumenical Movement has for the first time for centuries again brought the Orthodox world into a fuller view of occidental Christianity. Through it a profound and far-reaching interest in these ancient, Eastern churches has been awakened and is provoking a more intensive discussion.

Of course, the Orthodox Church world does not form an organic unity. The ecumenical patriarchate at Constantinople possesses only a spiritual supremacy, but can hardly exercise even that on account of the loss of the Anatolian dioceses and the limitations placed upon it by the Turks. It has to concede autonomy, i.e., complete independence, to a number of other churches. The Bulgarian Church has enforced its independence by founding a special exarchate. The Russian church is passing through distress and persecution. The oldest patriarchates, those in Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria, are suffering from insignificance, poverty and political restrictions.

It appears difficult to characterize Orthodox Chris-

tianity uniformly and exhaustively. Zankow<sup>1</sup> finds its nature defined in the Johannine idea of the incarnation of the Logos, or in the union of both God and man. Its dogmatics have not been consciously developed beyond the ancient councils. Liturgy and ecclesiastical customs have faithfully remained rooted in the ancient Christianity of the East. Spiritual and also theological movements, and even foreign influences, have come into these churches, however. The theological discussion is based upon ancient dogma and mystico-theological speculation, as it is represented in Russian territory by Solewjew, Chomjakow, Florensky, and at the present time by Bulgakow, Berdjajew, Glubokowsky, Arsenjew. This speculation begins primarily with the mystico-cosmic nature of the church as the body of Christ, and with the Incarnation and the cult. The essential practical virtues of the East are humility and love. Culture and Christianity are looked upon and fostered in close relationship to the nation. The church does not aim to control the world, but to penetrate and change it mystically.

In the ecumenical contact of Eastern Orthodoxy with the Occidental church world, the former supplied, as Ehrenberg put it, love, the salt for the preparation of the whole meal. "It gave consecration without enslaving, tradition without binding." The interest of the Occident was directed to its whole spir-

<sup>1</sup> Zankow, *Das orthodoxe Christentum des Ostens*, Berlin, 1928.—Cf. also the works of Gelzer, Beth, Mulert, Kidd, Arsenjew.

## THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

itual world not only by the world conferences, but also by the tremendous political and social events in the East, by the visionary explanations of the deepest problems of human nature by Russian literature, especially by Dostoievski. There is, furthermore, a turning to the irrational, which has its original basis in the East, and a newly awakened interest in the profounder meaning of liturgy as a sacred drama, together with the intellectual coöperation of the Russian diaspora in Western Europe.

These new and closer relations to Occidental Christianity <sup>1</sup> led to a closer investigation of their relationship and the differences between them. Zankow finds that the central position which the living Christ assumes in both constitutes the most pronounced and innermost relationship between Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism. Even the Protestant doctrine of justification and grace is close to the Orthodox conception, at least in that it permits a personal decision and rejects the idea of the real merit of works. In the attitude toward the doctrine of the two natures, in the conception of the God-man Christ, Protestantism puts the emphasis rather upon the human and Orthodoxy upon the divine.

With the ecumenical church conferences and the East-West conferences of theologians a new discussion has begun at different places which seeks the common, theological ground for that practical coöp-

<sup>1</sup> Also to Occidental thought as such, as, for instance, with Schestow, who is close to Kierkegaard.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

eration which has already begun. Zankow justifies this entrance of Eastern Orthodoxy into the ecumenical coöperation primarily on the following grounds:

Orthodoxy approves of an enlarging, broadening conception of the church and its unity and grieves over the existing separation, it desires to coöperate in the interests of the unity of the church, and it is conscious of making an essential contribution to common Christian thinking through its ancient inheritance.

Even though practical coöperation has not yet advanced very far, Eastern Orthodoxy is already yielding to Occidental influence in the following instances: the youth movement, theological work, an awakened interest in the social problem.

At these points Eastern Christianity seems actually to open its doors without considering its spiritual independence and uniqueness to be threatened thereby.

It may, for instance, be admitted on the part of Greek Orthodoxy, that "Biblicism, a special living on and living in the Bible, is a characteristic and even a privilege of the Protestant world, and that Greek Orthodoxy can in this connection actually learn from a genuine Evangelico-biblical Protestantism." Biblicism, therefore, is met with appreciation. But the scriptural evangelization of the Orthodox population as it is being practiced by different Protestant denominations in the East is not equally appreciated. "The churches of the Reformation ought to avoid merely

## THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

supporting a work of destruction, without a critical inspection of what is being offered in replacement of the old."

In the realm of theology, the discussion is simplified, for dogmatical codification has not advanced so far as in the Roman Catholic Church, and many a problem is, therefore, being considered a mere theologumenon instead of an untouchable dogma of the Church. This theological discussion has been facilitated in recent years not only by closer contacts of the Occident with the large, Russian diaspora in Western Europe, but also by special theological conferences, which have been organized by the Theological Commission of Stockholm.

The point of departure lies in the evident relationship with the West, which is found in Christological dogma, in the idea of freedom, and in that of the church. The latter assumes practically ecumenical character in the *Sobornost*. The Russian Orthodox Church especially has set no limits to the search after truth which renders possible a theological coöperation. Neither has Russia ever known a secularization of Christianity in the form of western Christian civilization. These characteristics of the Orthodox Church, and especially the central position given to the Christ, appears to several Barthian theologians to make possible the bridging of the gap between them.

Here, in this connection, belong the discussions, which have been conducted between the Russian theo-

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

logians Berdjajew and Bulgakoff, and the Protestants Lieb, Fricke, Culman and Ehrenberg.\*

The Orthodox Church holds firmly to ancient dogma. This provides the conservative, Occidental theology and primarily the Barthians with a common ground. Fritz Lieb beholds in it a very preacher of truth over against the humanism and the subjectivism of the Western world. Barthian theology, therefore, realizes, in this preservation of ancient dogma, the tremendous importance of the Orthodox Church and would quicken this dogma with the Gospel itself.

Because of the "firm and immovable form of its liturgy, through its objective content and by its profound reverence and devotion, by which the Orthodox believer again and again knows himself placed in the presence of the imperturbable majesty of God," the Orthodox Church has been spared the abasement of an idolatrous, humanistic subjectivism and idealism, even though it lacked the living proclamation of the Word.

Even though there are only a few individuals, who today are taking part in this discussion, it points to the actuality of the contact which is beginning to be established at the present time between Orient and Occident.

Berdjajew has an appreciation of the criticism of civilization which Barthian theology is expressing. The crisis of present civilization bears a tragic char-

\* *Orient und Okzident*, No. 1, 1929, et seq.—Put. No. 5.—*Religiöse Besinnung*, 1, 1928.

## THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

acter, but it was necessary. Karl Barth is endangering his critical function with a new scholasticism. As the most profound contrast to Orthodoxy Berdjajew points immediately to the difference in the estimation of mysticism. If Brunner conducts war against the idealistic mysticism and against Schleiermacher, Berdjajew actively appreciates the motives for this struggle. But the classical mysticism of the Orthodox Church has not been touched thereby. It is neither pantheism nor romantic immanence. Its true Christ-nature has so far never been realized by the Occident. Mysticism is the zenith of Christian life, "unto which the evangelical attitude of protest cannot penetrate at all." Likewise Protestantism does not understand the mystical "people's and monk's religion," the value of the sacraments, the realism of liturgy, and the Christian gnosis. The sovereignty of the Bible in Protestantism is threatened most severely by the criticism of the Bible of these very Protestants. Neither Greek Orthodoxy, nor Roman Catholicism experiences this difficulty, since the Scriptures do not possess the same controlling position among them.

The Orthodox criticism of Barthian theology continues in particular with the latter's contrasting of time and eternity. According to Barthian theology eternity does not enter into time. The separation of meta-history and history, which is thereby made inevitable, is rationalism and denies the reality of the Incarnation. From this world God is thus entirely removed and this theology is only the last stage of this

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

process, *viz.*, the Protestant secularization of man and history, begun long ago. The whole, massive, apotheosizing theology of Eastern Orthodoxy, which finds its most pronounced expression in the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, must rebel most violently against this emptying of world and man of the near and immanent divine powers, which have become real and active with the Incarnation. The Incarnation is held up as a real, cosmic process of redemption over against the poor and uncertain theology of the mere Word, which is, in addition to that, always hidden and critically threatened. A pure theology of the Word becomes a monologue on the part of God. The dialogue between God and man ceases to be. Pure transcendence dissolves the church, this divine-human organism, in which the Incarnation is not only proclaimed, but also realized. God does not only speak here, but he actually becomes flesh and blood and redeems the world ontologically in its entire cosmic extent, and not only psychologically in the subjectively apprehended act of grace.

If, by the sundering transcendence and immanence, God is thus removed into an abstract sphere where events no longer occur and where there is only speaking and listening, then man is also robbed of his most profound reality by this rupture. "The image of God is extinguished." Man is identified with sin, and the most profound Christian truth, which consists of the message that God became man in order that man may be made divine by the divine grace in a real ontologi-

## THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

cal process and not only by a forensic procedure, is dissolved.

With the limitation of the religious relationship to God and the soul that is in the individualistic conception, the soul lost its cosmic relationship. The cosmos becomes mere nature and is no longer the real object of redemption and of the individual justification of the individual soul. The cosmic transfiguration is lost, as well as the world-wide, sovereign efficacy of the Holy Spirit.

The ideas of creation and redemption are here brought into such close, mutual relationship by Berdjajew in passing over sin that one feels like calling to him *nondum considerasti quantum ponderis sit peccatum*. With this whole conception sin becomes a natural condition of the unredeemed creature, an idea against which Protestant theology has always protested and must protest.

Berdjajew compares Barth's abstract absolutism of sin and grace with the "maximalism" of Ibsen's Brand, who wants everything or nothing, and who knows nothing of the slow, divinely mutating process, by which man is gradually led to a higher nature. The real, naturalistic redemption by the God of love, stands, therefore, diametrically opposed to the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, in which rules a God of wrath. The Greek *apokatastasis panton*, i.e., the final redemption of all, stands in contrast to the terrible, final judgment, where only wrath and no longer love will speak.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

This counter-critique, although it appreciates a certain affinity, must, however, be regarded indeed as a distortion of the basic Barthian conception.<sup>4</sup>

It was to be expected that these contrasts would not only become evident in the divergent conception of the process of salvation and the religious relationship, but also in the doctrines of the church. According to Berdjajew, Protestantism has isolated the soul, whereas it really belongs in a cosmic and social relationship, viz., in the church, and is illuminated by the divine light, as is also the world of nature. By its affiliation with the church the soul is brought into a relationship to the higher world. Only as a whole, in an internal and mystical way, is the church bearer of the Holy Spirit. No individual and no hierarchy as such, therefore, possesses the highest authority.

This critique of Berdjajew's is, of course, only that of an individual. But since the Orthodox theologians do not depart from the official doctrines of their church in essentials, and possess greater leeway only in the interpretation of the theologumena, i.e., not in dogmatics, this exposition will probably characterize in a general way the attitude of Eastern Orthodoxy to this new Protestant theology. Lately, Greek theology has also been taking up the discussion. Bratsiotis<sup>5</sup> is more sympathetic toward Barthian theology; he recognizes its orthodox Christol-

<sup>4</sup> *Orient und Okzident*, No. 4, 1930.

<sup>5</sup> ἡ θεολογία τού K. Barth καὶ τῶν περὶ αὐτόν Athens, 1931, in the Jubilee publication for Archbishop Chrysostomos.

## THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

ogy, its emphasis on the transcendence of God and the sinfulness of man, and its eschatology. He also criticizes, however, its dualism, its biblical criticism, and thinks it too Calvinistic in its presentation of the relation between God and man. This also throws penetrating light upon the endeavors at church union, as initiated by the Lausanne Conference. At Lausanne the Eastern Orthodox delegation almost from the very beginning drew sharp boundary lines for all coöperation relating to dogmatics and has, therefore, sought other channels for reaching an agreement with Occidental Christianity. It has done this, on the one hand, by establishing closer contacts with the Anglican world, which are now assured, following the Lambeth Conference, by the declaration of the Patriarch of Alexandria, and also by sending a delegation for the purpose of reaching an agreement in matters of doctrine. On the other hand, the accord is being accomplished by practical association with the Stockholm Conference and by the participation in social coöperation of the churches, which was requested recently by the pan-Hellenic Conference of theologians. The questions, which Barthianism has directed to the Roman Catholic and to the Protestant Church, are, of course, directed also to the Orthodox Church.

Since the Orthodox Patriarch Cyril Lucaris attempted to build a bridge between Orthodoxy and Protestantism, no serious effort had been made to discuss the problems of mutual relationship. The

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

ecumenical conferences of Stockholm and Lausanne, the patient and selfless services which the Y. M. C. A. rendered to the Orthodox student world and Barthian theology certainly represent a new phase in this mutual relationship. This became possible because these bodies followed no policy of proselytism in the field of the Orthodox churches. These churches could therefore open their doors with greater confidence to Western influences, although the suspicion of being too strongly influenced by Protestantism is still there, as is the fear of the Uniate policy of the Church of Rome.

Nevertheless there are today four points of contact where the Orthodox Church is open to Western influence in so far as this does not have in view a missionary purpose and is only stimulating the effort of these churches themselves:

(1) Where a beginning is made toward placing the living Christ and His prophetic Word in the center of the message and life of a church which hitherto was entirely mystical, hierarchic and ritualistic. Without minimizing in the least the symbolic value of these elements, certain leaders are giving a place to the simple evangelical sermon in certain Orthodox churches and in the ecumenical conferences.

(2) Where the Orthodox Church understands the necessity of a Christian youth movement. Recent conferences in Greece have shown that the methods of the Y. M. C. A. and the Student Chris-

## THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

tian Movement can be adopted by this church in their entirety without any menace to its historic character and to the advantage of the life of the Church.

(3) Where the Orthodox Church sees the importance of studying the current economic and industrial problems and feels a new obligation to apply the Gospel to social conditions. The example of the Russian Church and the seriousness of the agricultural problem even for the church is convincing the leaders that they must again take up the ancient social impulses contained in the writings of the ancient Fathers, especially Basil and Chrysostom. A Study Conference convened by the International Christian Social Institute of Geneva has recently united a group of church leaders from the Balkan churches at Bucharest and resolutions were taken to introduce social activity in the Orthodox Church.

(4) Where the Orthodox Church, which is sending many students and scholars to Western universities, is entering into a discussion of common theological problems with Western theologians. This is the case not only in universities, but also in the Theological Commission of the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work. The ancient dogma of the church, of course, cannot be tampered with. But the church, not having gone so far in dogmatic statements as the Roman Church, finds a large area of *theologumena*, of open theological problems which can be approached from both sides. This theologi-

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

cal contact, of the utmost importance, was unthinkable as long as Protestantism seemed to Orthodox theologians to be tainted with liberal and modernist views attacking the ancient dogmatic formulæ. Entering into such a discussion again becomes possible with a theology like the Barthian, insisting on the supernatural, revealed character of the Gospel, the authority of the church and a philosophy of faith.

## CHAPTER VII

### FOREIGN MISSIONS AND BARTHIANISM

As Julius Richter has frequently pointed out, foreign missions have already reached a state of profound crisis through the criticism which the young mission churches direct against the heretofore prevalent missionary methods, the industrialization of the East, and through the conscious resistance, which the great pagan world-religions are organizing today against Christianity. The mission churches are revolting against Occidental guardianship, against the carrying of European-American confessionalism into mission territory, and against the consequences of the industrialization of the East, for which foreign missions share the responsibility. The demands, which were raised in conjunction with this criticism, were expressed very emphatically at the Jerusalem Conference.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, the ancient heathenism of these countries has been awakened to a new consciousness of its independence by the very work of foreign missions. Not only are its ancient, religious possessions worked up with new fervor and placed over against

<sup>1</sup> The documents of this Conference have been published by W. Paton in 9 volumes, Oxford, 1928.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

Christianity, but also its philosophy and its ethics, in a form which, in their highest expression may well risk philosophical and religious comparison. It is also preparing for real, intellectual and political resistance and has begun a counter-mission in some parts of the Christian Occident. Inasmuch as today individual missionary associations or mission churches do not face heathenism singly, but since, as a part of the entire Protestant world, missions form a closely united entity which endeavors to pursue a common and uniform mission politics through its International Missionary Council, Christian missions appear to be in a much more advantageous position over against divided heathenism. But by this very union the differences within the missionary world itself, especially between the American and the European conception of missions, have become more evident. The crisis, therefore, not only emerges with reference to the object of missions itself but also in regard to the true missionary motive and missionary methods. Into this crisis, which is internal as well as external, the questioning of Barthian theology enters like a dissolving ferment. The criticism of the young mission churches has raised only the question of the right missionary method and of the attitude of the church toward missions. The missionary motive itself, i.e., the justification for missions, has not been doubted. Barthian theology, however, questions both the possibility and the motive of missions.

The Barthian critique of missions has failed to be-

## FOREIGN MISSIONS AND BARTHIANISM

come a serious menace only because the missionary leaders themselves have taken up this critique at once and applied it positively to themselves as a challenge to self-reflection, to a new orientation, to repentance, which even missions must accept. Hartenstein, Brachmann, Devaranne have expressed themselves<sup>3</sup> along these lines. Even liberal theology is willing to listen, admitting that even "mission work can only be done in sin." This realization is the work of Barthian theology.<sup>4</sup>

The critique of missions has thus immediately become fruitful. But it has at the same time served to bring out most acutely that fundamental difference in the conception of missions which exists between American and European missions. Indeed, one receives the impression that this Barthian critique is a welcome reinforcement to European missions in their critical discussion with American missions. This dispute, which began with the new organization of the International Missionary Council, is felt today at all missionary conferences and has also repeatedly found literary, and even polemical expression as, for instance, in a book by Karl Bornhausen.<sup>5</sup> It is essentially a European criticism of American missions, which he designates outright as exponents of the Christianity of the last generation.

Barthian theology has criticized the missions of

<sup>3</sup> *Zeitschrift fuer Mission und Religionswissenschaft*, 1931 et al.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Rust in the *Protestantenblatt*, 15, 1931.

<sup>5</sup> Karl Bornhausen, *Der Amerikanische Aktivismus*, Toepelmann, Giessen, 1925.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

the past from several angles. At the very outset it denies Occidental Christianity the moral and religious right to carry on missions. This Christianity should not be permitted to do mission work at all, for it has only too evidently betrayed to the world its original message. But above all the missionary motive itself is critically analyzed. The aim in missions must not be the desire of a Christian or even converted Christianity to work for an unconverted and un-Christian humanity: "This difference does not exist before God." Christian and un-Christian humanity live in a fellowship of sin. "Everything lies in the shadow of death and guilt." As a matter of principle, the Christian and the pagan are, therefore, considered to be on the same level. Missions are solely God's responsibility and must not be confused with the extension of Christianity. The only motive, which one may admit as acceptable, is the testimony of the Word. The cause for missions does not, therefore, lie in a genuine attainment or in a higher ethics, but only in the obedience to a divine commission. Missions may not, therefore, grow out of a consciousness of being sent (Stange).

From this position the prevalent understanding of the nature of missions is critically revised. It is the pure "proclamation which testifies to the almighty God, who may only be recognized on the basis of the Gospel." Then it may be no intentional or pedagogically mediated work of conversion, empowered by the Occidental consciousness of "being sent." Nor may its

## FOREIGN MISSIONS AND BARTHIANISM

purpose be the propagation of civilization. Every diffusion of social and cultural achievements is rejected. The "Social Gospel" has no place in missions. Otherwise missions would become only the "hunting-dog of Cæsar."<sup>1</sup> But even the presentation of Christ, which Stanley Jones<sup>2</sup> understands to be the nature and the task of missions, is to be rejected, for in this very idea is expressed the heathen "hybris" of the Occidental Christians. "There is no such thing as 'Christian.'" Missions can only desire to achieve Christ-likeness in order to realize that we are revealed in our "Christ-unlikeness." The offering of Christ by missions is impossible, because we must come to confess the "ungodliness of our heathenish existence on earth."<sup>3</sup>

With these basic demands the question of missionary methods are relegated to the background. Every adaptation of our Gospel to heathenism is prohibited. "Every attempt to make the Gospel agreeable to foreign religions by reducing Christ until he fits into their endeavors and longings as climax or crown is forbidden."

The proclamation of the Word shall remain the *skandalon* and not be mediated pedagogically or methodically by the psychology of religion, not by

<sup>1</sup> Schuetz, *Zwischen Nil und Kaukasus*, Kaiser, Munich, 1931.

<sup>2</sup> Stanley Jones, *Christ of the Indian Road*, *Christ at the Round Table*, The Abingdon Press, 1925 and 1929, respectively.

<sup>3</sup> *Zeitschrift fuer Mission und Religions Wissenschaft*, 1, 1931, and *Christus am Torii und Pagode*, Klotz, Gotha, 1931, by Th. Devaranne.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

any historic-religious adjustment, and not by any practical social work. This implies, therefore, "restraint in social, medical and educational labor. That is of secondary importance." Missions must not satisfy the hunger for culture, but only awaken the hunger for redemption. The door is to be closed to every syncretistic method. A goodly portion of these remonstrances has been accepted and approved, especially by the European missionary world, and is applied against the social interpretation of the task of missions as held by many leaders in the American missionary world (as stated above). The recently published Laymen's Missionary Report shows this same tendency to emphasize the secular aspect of missions in a number of its chapters, and will certainly provoke wide discussion of the whole subject. The separation of missions from every cultural work, the proclamation of the absoluteness of Christianity, or better, of the Gospel, the rejection of missionary and social activism, the witnessing character of the missionary message, have already been so close to European missions in the past that it does not prove difficult for them to take up these demands of the Barthian theology <sup>•</sup> into their new conception and self-reflection. Hartenstein <sup>•</sup> is doing that of late in the *International Review of Missions*.

<sup>•</sup> Cf. also E. Brunner, *Missions Magazine*, January, 1931.

<sup>•</sup> Hartenstein, *Was hat die Theologie Barths der Mission zu sagen?* Kaiser, Munich, 1928.—Cf. also *Zwischen den Zeiten*, 1928.

## FOREIGN MISSIONS AND BARTHIANISM

In this way Paul Schuetz's <sup>10</sup> idea of turning one's back on missions altogether has been avoided.

So far as I know, the Americans have not yet expressed themselves as to this radical critique of missions.

On the other hand, though the liberal camp has frequently recognized the value of the critique, European missionary circles have tried to offer objections to it. These in turn deserve serious consideration from the Barthian side. The Barthian critique of missions has indeed not mastered the history of religion nor the comparative study of religions, and frequently lacks a sufficient knowledge of missionary facts. The higher rationalism of the Barthian theology is here proving too simple and too brief over against concrete reality. A realistic view, which, for instance, penetrates deeper into Amida-Buddhism,<sup>11</sup> cannot so simply return to the theory of the "glittering vices" of the heathen, by means of which former generations sought to get around the problem of religious equivalents in other religions. This critique will probably find an echo shortly from the other great religions, especially from Japan, where Barthian theology is studied diligently. In part, they are extracting from it weapons for the

<sup>10</sup> Paul Schuetz, vol. 2 of *Orient und Occident. Zwischen Nil und Kaukasus*, Kaiser, Munich.—Cf. also Knak, *Zwischen Nil und Tafelbai*, 1931.

<sup>11</sup> Witte, *Buddhismus in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Quelle und Meyer, Leipzig.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

struggle against Occidental Christianity and its missions. In part they are attempting to combat the Barthian thesis of the absoluteness of Christianity by philosophical and ethical proofs.

It is also objected that the eggshells of a “provincial, nationalistic and confessional Christianity,” still cling to Barthianism, and from them it will have to cut its way through to an ecumenical conception of Christianity as a common concern of humanity. Thereby the claim to absoluteness is at once brought up for discussion. This is done not only for practical reasons but because of the recollection of what ancient Christianity had to say about a *logos spermatikos*. Above all, however, Barthian theology is accused of disregarding the very command to carry on missions,<sup>18</sup> which was directly given to sinners, who, therefore, may not declare a “moratorium of missions.” “Not: Wait, God will do it”; but: “Work, God will do it.”

If the profundity and self-reflection which Barthian theology demands of the church, does not keep step with the people’s acquaintance with this radical critique of missions, or, if the Barthian missionary leaders do not succeed in leading the missionary community to a positive revaluation of the objections that have been made, there may quickly follow a tremendous decline of missionary enthusiasm and a subsequent withdrawal from the whole foreign work of a

<sup>18</sup> Brachmann, *Theologie der Krisis und Mission, Zeitschrift fuer Missionskunde und Religionswissenschaft*, 1931.

## FOREIGN MISSIONS AND BARTHIANISM

large portion of home support, upon which it has been built. In America this is already strongly noticeable even in the Student Volunteer Movement, which has furnished a whole army of missionaries.<sup>18</sup> It is even more true because the Barthian objections are largely identical with those that have for a long time been hurled against missions by Occidental civilization.

The publication of *Rethinking Missions* seems to justify this criticism of the Barthians in so far as its underlying humanistic and syncretistic theology is concerned. This criticism and the world crisis which affects mission work very dangerously are beginning to give a new orientation to the whole missionary movement.

<sup>18</sup> Since 1920 the number of new missionaries fell from 1731 to 558 in 1927, and among the students from 2783 to 388. Since the Detroit Conference of the Student Volunteer Movement an increase, however, is again being observed.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE CULTURAL LIFE OF TODAY, AND SUMMARY

NONE of the discussions so far lay claim to completeness. They are preliminary and isolated soundings which give advance information of the effect which is produced upon the ecumenical world by the new fundamental form of questioning.

The aim of this presentation could not possibly be a cataloguing of all the reactions, if for no other reason than the limitations set by language. There would be no use in following up the effect of Barthian theology into every single country, or the writer would have had to name the Baltic, Hungarian, Transylvanian and Japanese faculties, all of which are strongly preoccupied with this theology.<sup>1</sup>

There are indeed only a few individuals whose statements may claim to be typical. At any rate they are representative of an existing attitude of mind in the various churches. The survey confirms what has

<sup>1</sup> For the benefit of those readers, who understand Hungarian, I shall at least cite a few titles of Hungarian writings about K. Barth which, however, I myself am not able to read. As in other instances I have again been dependent upon the reports of my kind friends. Toeroek István, *A Barthi Theologia Pápa*, 1931.—Tavaszy, *A Kijelentés Feltétele Alatt Cluj*, 1929.—Nagy Géza, *Barth Theologidjának Debreczen*, 1931.—Imre Lajos, *Isten Is az Emberi Zélek Cluj*, 1929.

## SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE LIFE OF TODAY

been said above, that the discussion with the new theology is taking place upon ascending levels. It is progressing from merely taking cognizance to an external, theological critique, and finally to a real, inner occupation with the questions raised.

It is still too early to give more than mere outlines of the effects of Barthian theology upon the church world. They certainly are even now considerable, partly assenting, partly dissenting. If one endeavors to sketch these contours in spite of the above-mentioned difficulties, it may be done somewhat as follows, though with pronounced reservations:

1. The existing ecclesiastical tradition and the religious and psychological uniqueness of a people or a church, essentially determine not only the kind and the form of an intellectual discussion, but also the receptivity for new statements of the religious problem.

2. The prophetic element of the Barthian message is less contested than its later theological formulation, the *Epistle to the Romans* is more effective than the *Dogmatics*. The required self-reflection and repentance, the Reformation recognition of sin and grace, submission to the sovereignty of God, and a fideistic consideration of one's existence, have been made alive again for our time in a new way and in the form of present-day thought. However, the attempted dogmatic reformulation of these basic Christian truths has not met with a uniform degree of acceptance.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

3. The demanded *diastasis* over against the civilization of our time is realized as being necessary, and the former *Kultur-Optimismus* is widely shaken. In this connection, however, the particular fate of a people plays an essential part. Through it, however, a theology of Revelation again gains its independence over against a theology of cultural synthesis.

4. Barthian theology has not only revived the study of the Reformation, but its conception of the Reformers has brought new and almost unnoticed characteristics to light, as, for instance, the "unknown God." This is especially true in the case of Luther. Over against the ethicized and ecclesiasticized Luther it has placed once more the Luther who testifies to the divine mystery. (Cf. Walther Koehler.)

5. The encroachments of historicism and psychologism, which had devastating effect on the theology of yesterday, are definitely repelled today. Thereby the limits are also set, within which history and psychology retain their just rights.

6. The guilt of an entire period, the inner struggle of the present generation, the tragedy of the religious relationship in a world impoverished of God, and the cry to God out of deepest distress, the primitive Christian hope of judgment and redemption—all have received a new prophetical and eschatological expression. The eschatological nature of Jesus' proclamation is understood not only as the historical form of his message, but is once more understood in its essential actuality. An "existential" method has

## SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE LIFE OF TODAY

thus superseded the historicocritical method, which retains its supremacy within its own realm.

7. On the other hand, the intense dualism between time and eternity, transcendence and immanence, is widely criticized and rejected as one-sided, exaggerated and as a remnant of a philosophical abstraction by the real, theological criticism, on the part of Protestant, Roman Catholic and even Eastern Orthodox theology. Such a complete separation of God and man is admitted in many circles only for the purpose of dialectical discussion of an antithesis, which is, of course, genuine. To accompany this analytico-dialectical method, a method of synthesis, demanded by the Incarnation, is expected as a necessary complement.

8. For the most part modern theology defends history and experience<sup>8</sup> against their depreciation by Barthianism. It does indeed give up a pure historicism and psychologism,<sup>9</sup> but recognizes in history and experience indispensable pedagogical aids in attaining the religious relationship. There is found also on the ground of experience the possibility of that continuous discussion between theology and civilization, which is considered necessary in spite of the above-mentioned *diastasis*.

9. Liberal and conservative theology criticize the inconsistency of a union of dogmatical conservatism

<sup>8</sup> Heinzelmann, *Erfahrungsgrundlage der Theologie*, 1929.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Wobbermin, *Im Kampf gegen Historismus und Psychologismus*, *Theologische Blaetter*, September 1931.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

and a critical radicalism in the treatment of the Bible.

10. The leading of the church back to its true mission, viz., the proclamation of the Word, is welcomed, but the rejection or depreciation of the ethical and social tasks of the church is criticized. The ethical task is thereby also laid before Barthian theology as a necessary field of inquiry and, on account of this attitude, is in part also once more taken up by it, as, for instance, quite recently by Brunner.<sup>4</sup>

11. The conducting of the confessional discussion as the common consideration of a common concern in place of the theological, specialized critique of contrasting positions is welcomed as an advance. One may already observe a more marked rapprochement on the part of the confessions because of this concern than existed on the former basis of ecclesiastical tradition. And this in spite of the theological differences still widely and desperately maintained.

12. The present trend of thought and the philosophical tendency favor a turning to religious objectivism and realism.

The discussion has even today, however, reached a point of finality in the following instances, where paths separate, as they have always separated. There the tragedy of Christendom's division appears to reach into a depth which we evidently cannot fathom with our thinking:

(a) The first point is the question whether the

<sup>4</sup> Brunner, *Das Gebot und die Ordnungen*, I.C.B. Mohr, 1932.

## SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE LIFE OF TODAY

finite is able to receive the infinite or to express it. The point of controversy is whether the *finitum capax infiniti* is true or the *finitum non capax infiniti*. To begin with, this is a philosophical problem. Corresponding to it in the realm of religion are the questions: Is man indeed capable of being susceptible to grace? Is he able somehow to retain the divine image? Is he able to experience the effect and power of the Holy Spirit, and, even the certainty of salvation? All Lutheranism, Anglicanism, Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy affirm this capability of man, since it is a prerogative of divine omnipotence and not of the metaphysical decision of man to determine whether man has been endowed with this capability or not. The answer to this question is not determined by the logic of the above philosophical statement, but by the divine Word, i.e., by Revelation itself, and it is the Incarnation which constitutes a positive answer to this question.

(b) The second point is the attitude toward the value or lack of value of the ethical activity of man. It is evident at this point that the Pelagian conflict has not yet been fought to a conclusion. In Protestantism there is no longer any question of a decision in favor of original Pelagianism or a theology of merit. But, on the other hand, the problem arises how far the human will is enabled by grace and faith to receive the divine will, and is being led by the Holy Spirit to be obedient, i.e., to act.

Zwingli's belief that man is a tool is diametrically

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

opposed to any conception of faith, which leads to ethical quietism or to a pietism that flees the world. Does not a pure ethics of grace deprive Christianity of that pedagogical task, which it heretofore believed itself to possess?

(c) The third point is whether a pure theology of faith is possible as a science. The question is whether the task of theology ought only to be that of preaching and affirming a creed or whether it ought also to extend to the intellectual and spiritual life in general.<sup>\*</sup>

So far as the writer can see the characteristic decisions for and against the Barthian theology are made at these points. Because of the necessary brevity of this presentation this cannot be made any plainer.

. . . . .

In the light of the third question, however, brief allusions to the conflict between this theology and contemporary philosophy as well as present-day thought in general, as it is taking place outside of the theological and church realm, may prove worthwhile. Certain it is that for a long time no theological movement has enjoyed such attention on the part of philosophy. This is the more remarkable, since it really appears questionable in Barthian theology, whether it wants to enter into a relationship with culture as such, and whether it wants to exert any influence upon it.

To begin with, it has already been stated above that

<sup>\*</sup> Cf. Scholz, above, on this question.

## SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE LIFE OF TODAY

the trend of present-day thought is favorable to Barthian theology. Faith in the exclusive truth of the world picture presented by natural science has been tremendously shaken philosophically. On the other hand, a noticeable inclination to objectivism and realism is taking place in philosophy. This is true not only because of the rise of Neo-Thomism, but also in the trend of transcendental Neo-Kantianism toward a new ontology, as it is sought by Scheler, Heidegger and Nikolai Hartmann. Over against the conception of the world as a creation of the mind, these men are again warning against the encroachments of thinking over actual being. The "object" shall be rendered its due. Thus it becomes possible to comprehend the parallel movement in Barthian theology toward a religious objectivism.

Philosophy has not for a long time been so close to theology, and Barthianism, on the other hand, is directly credited by Hans Michael Mueller <sup>1</sup> with possessing an "eminently philosophical talent and both an anti- and pro-philosophical orientation." Since "the concern is with the reality of the whole man, with the very existing of man, as an indication and manifestation of the meaning of life," theology and philosophy are drawing closer together in this "existential" thinking and struggle against a common foe, the pure philosophy of consciousness. From the previous "I"-dimension, thinking is decisively breaking into the "thou"-dimension. The methodical

<sup>1</sup> *Zwischen den Zeiten*, October, 1931.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

link between theology and philosophy is no longer primarily the Kantian a priorism of the primacy of practical reason, as the phenomenological view of reality (*Wesensschau*), where the community of co-operation as well as its limits becomes evident.

With this new relation between philosophy and theology there immediately arose the task of a philosophy of religion for the Barthian theologians. The Barthian philosophy of religion is endeavoring to point out the independence of theology over against philosophy, and to deal anew with the problem of the boundary line between God and man, between eternity and time.<sup>1</sup> It interprets the new appreciation of Christianity in contemporary philosophy as "the repentant mind of philosophy," which is returning again to its place as an *ancilla theologiae*.

Against this claim, philosophy is, of course, protesting emphatically. Grisebach, for instance, combats this demand by pointing to the difference between truth and reality which Barthian theology had not sufficiently observed. He would not permit uncritical use of philosophical methods in the field of theology, not even to a "divinely favored theology." The philosophical critique of Heinrich Scholz has already been indicated above. Eduard Spranger contests the radical, Barthian negation of civilization and would see in civilization the "material for exercising one's ethical powers." The violent dispute serves only to demonstrate how theology and philosophy have en-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Brunner, above.

## SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE LIFE OF TODAY

tered again into a real discussion and how the questioning of the Barthian theology has also impregnated philosophy anew. Heinemann,<sup>\*</sup> for instance, calls the new theology, with its acceptance of an absolute task and its doctrine of the qualitative difference between God and man, "one of the most magnificent phenomena of Protestantism." Count Keyserling looks upon it outright as the only salvation of Protestantism and believes that the life and death of Protestantism depend upon it, regardless of whether it can stand a theology of the type of Gogarten's.

The questions, about which the discussion with contemporary philosophy revolves, concern the problem of idealism, the foundation of ethics and the dialectical method.

In spite of the critical attitude toward idealism the importance for the liberation of the spirit from the grip of materialism together with its universalism are being defended against Barthianism, even though its limits are being set forth. In the discussion of ethics one hears the warning against a complete dissolution of an "imperative" ethics, an ethics of "disposition" or an ethics of "values" into a pure ethics of grace, which does not determine the will clearly and concretely. Albert Schweitzer in his *Kultur-Ethik* and especially W. Hallpach<sup>\*</sup> consider the

<sup>\*</sup> Heinemann, *Neue Wege der Philosophie*, page 399, Leipzig, 1929.

<sup>\*</sup> Hallpach, *Von Wittenberg nach Rom.*

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

dissolution of such norms into a passionate theocentrism a dangerous threatening of social life.

In addition to the foregoing and of considerable effect on the thought of the time, and especially on most recent poetry, do we find Barthianism's gaze into chaos; its fundamental pessimism gives consideration to the end of the world and therewith to the problem of death.

. . . . .

It is evident that Barthian theology is a tree, whose fruits have been carried far into the world. We have met it in many lands and churches; others lie beyond our observation. We see its questions penetrating even into philosophy and into the life of the congregations and to a certain extent also into the general cultural consciousness. This will be of decisive importance for the future of this movement. If it were to remain only a dispute among theologians, if it were to become merely a theological school, without reaching the spirit of the times, cultural thought as such, and lay-piety, its final and most profound effect, would probably be lacking. The movement is obviously aware of that. Karl Barth, therefore, warns against Barthianism. For this reason Barthian theology wants to remain a movement and not become an organization or a school of thought. It is still, of course, so much in motion that it is almost impossible to determine its theological place. Its final theological word has probably not yet been spoken. Yet the

## **SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE LIFE OF TODAY**

“theological word” is not its most profound concern but the Word of God to man which is spoken to us in Jesus Christ. The seriousness of this message, the helplessness in which it finds us, God’s breaking into this human existence by judgment and grace, all this has found a new expression in this theology. And this expression disturbs and awakens responsibility even where its theological forms are not acknowledged as final.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT AND BARTHIANISM

#### SPIRIT AND ORIGIN OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

THE spirit and driving force of the Ecumenical Movement were granted us in a day of dire distress. The distress was caused by the realization that the empirical church fell short in fulfilling its God-given mission, that in its present form it was failing to meet the demands of the hour, that in its present state of mind and external condition it no longer was able to reach the men and women of today through either its message, its faith, or its love, and that the glad tidings of Jesus were not functioning in a unifying manner, as is indeed their object. This was not only the "distress without merit" of which Karl Barth speaks, but an "essential" distress. It is the distress wrought by an inner contradiction between that which the church preaches and that which the church now is; a contradiction between its designation to be the Body of Christ, *Corpus Christi* and that which the church really is, namely, a distressing picture of division and discord, a lacerated and dismembered Body of Christ.

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

The *one* Christ, before the very eyes of both believers and unbelievers, is divided and broken up, the *one* selfsame message is vitiated by being cut up into contradictory parts. The one God-given Gospel becomes many gospels of the various churches and confessions.

That is the distress of Christianity today. It rises before our conscience as collective guilt whenever we look up to the *one* Christ upon the Cross, who died there for us all. This guilt was openly acknowledged in the penitential Confession of Stockholm. This condition of the church, torn asunder and ineffectual as it is, and the social and educational impotence of the church are evidence that our relation to this Christ who died for all has been disturbed or else it has not yet been fully realized. Down into this distress of the church has penetrated one of the main roots feeding the Ecumenical Movement. This movement has not sprung from the desire for power, nor from a mere wish to organize, nor from the urge to expand, but from an actual need.

The Ecumenical Movement has been accused of "hybris." If understood correctly it is rather a new humility of those individual churches which do not consider their preliminary and accidental nature as something final. The humility of the finite church consists in the willingness to submit ever and again to being lifted up by God, and in this decision to avoid making concrete and absolute the forms once adopted, and to let them perish if necessary in the

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

creative dynamic of the Holy Spirit, who is the builder of a larger fellowship than that represented by a single church.

Whenever one cries to God from the depths of such a distress of inadequacy, of spiritual poverty, of common guilt, then God answers by granting faith through the Gospel.

This is the second root of the Ecumenical Movement. It must be said with all emphasis that the Ecumenical Movement is a movement out of faith, of that faith which says: "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief!" Although the ecumenical-theological formulation has not as yet been found, it is nevertheless an act of faith, when out of the disintegration of the present Christian world one looks toward the *Una Sancta*. We also confess this faith in the Apostles' Creed, and the Reformation theology has it in mind when it speaks of the one invisible church. This belief in the *Una Sancta* is particularly the driving motive of the movement of Lausanne. But the Stockholm Movement which does not put dogmatical questions into the foreground, has also been born out of faith as well as out of distress. The act of faith from which this movement has sprung, has perhaps resulted less from the divine promise of the *Una Sancta* than from taking seriously the world-rule of Christ. It is a faith in the world-transforming power of the Gospel, a faith in the Redeemer and Helper, a faith in Christ who is Lord of the whole Christian life as he is Lord of the human heart, a faith in the coming Kingdom of God which means the end of this

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

world. This faith is construed as obedience. Therefore the act which precedes from this faith, which, indeed, has to proceed from it, is not our disposition of God's plans; it is not activity, nor Pelagian "hybris," but surrender, submission to the Spirit of God, who is fulfilling the promises of the Bible. The Church-Union Movement with all of its weak points and its human shortcomings, does take its place under the divine Word of repentance and faith.

The Ecumenical Movement is therefore not concept, system, purposive planning; it is movement, need, longing, dynamic faith, trust in the guidance of the Spirit, receptiveness and obedience to the demand of a divine moment. The Ecumenical Movement is just this wherever its essential origin and its actual inspiration are adhered to and rightly understood. By these it must be measured and evaluated and not by the insufficiencies attaching to it. According to the belief of its leaders it is a movement granted by God and so it becomes not only a way leading to new acts of God, but at the same time a way leading to a crisis for all those forms of Christianity that are individualistic, sect-like or determined merely by nation or confession.

## THE PROBLEMATICS OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

Besides these fundamental questions of faith, however, the Ecumenical Movement also has its theological problems. In fact, as a whole, it constitutes a theological problem itself and this in a threefold

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

way. In the first place, it sets before theology the task of proving the scriptural warrant of this quest of the church. Besides this there is the problem of dogmatical justification, i.e., how can we find a basis and point of departure for the movement within our doctrinal system. The third problem arises when one inquires after the theological foundation of the separate tasks, for example, when one seeks the theological justification of the socio-ethical problems of Stockholm. These theological tasks are today being submitted by the various movements to the entire Christian world. At present these are but the first attempts at such a comprehensive exegetical, biblico-theological and systematic treatment of these problems.<sup>1</sup>

Regarding our first question, the object is not so much to find scriptural warrant for the Ecumenical Movement itself but rather how the existing differences can be biblically justified. In the documents of the Stockholm World Conference Deissmann correctly calls attention to the fact that the Ecumenical Movement of Stockholm, according to both its spirit and its word, seeks the deepest possible authorization in the Bible and that from this source it draws its impulse, its power and its aim.

The systematic proposition is more difficult. The problem can by no means be developed from the concept of a general abstract Christianity.

<sup>1</sup> R. Wallau, *Einigung der Kirchen*.—A bibliography is issued by Stockholm and Lausanne.

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

The point of departure for the systematic proposition can be found in the concept of the church and in the definition of its tasks. Attempts to do this can be found in every confessional theology.

It is a fact, however, that the movement did not arise from reflection upon the nature and mission of the church—at least the Stockholm movement did not. It grew out of the distress and the pressure of a *Kairos*; not out of a static world of concepts, but out of the dynamics of the Spirit who forces “religious actualization,” to use an expression of Tillich. Its origin does not lie in theology but in a decision to which the church was driven in a new and terrible meeting with God as well as with the world. It must here be conceded that perhaps the churches with their eschatological outlook were not yet ready for the absolutely necessary and imperative decisions. All this is important for the systematic treatment of the theological proposition.

We cannot here enter upon a discussion of this question; that would necessitate coöperation of the widest scope. We shall here restrict ourselves to mentioning a few conditions which will have to be met before we can take up the general theological proposition, i.e., the task as a whole.

In the first place there can be no thought of an Ecumenical Movement where the claim of human supremacy exists. An ecclesiastical imperialism, as W. A. Brown calls it, spells the death of “Ecumenism.” The spiritual attitude in joining the Ecumeni-

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

cal Movement can at all times be only submission to God, and obedience to Jesus Christ. The creation of real fellowship was always the work of the creative Spirit and not that of our organization, power and its claims, nor was it the work of compulsion.

An Ecumenical Movement is equally impossible from the sectarian viewpoint. Here there is lacking the biblical and historical understanding of the church and very often also the ability to distinguish between the types of mind.

An Ecumenical Movement is possible only within a fellowship of heterogeneous Christian bodies, a fellowship already latently present. These bodies must somehow feel themselves related to a common center and feel themselves in duty bound to give this fellowship theological and ecclesiastical expression. An ecclesiastical or theological certainty of faith which was given once for all in certain forms, blocks the way from the very beginning for an Ecumenical Movement. Such a movement is therefore conceivable only in a church communion where there is already present the consciousness of shortcoming. It must be conscious of something provisional and of something in need of completion. It must feel that its knowledge is just beginning, and that this beginning demands continuation. Something is hidden and must be sought after. Even a sense of guilt over against entire Christendom as well as against the individual sister-churches must be consciously felt. When Pastor Robinson bade farewell to the Pilgrim

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

Fathers embarking for America, he cried out to them: "There are still more truths which God will allow to break forth from his holy Word." Herein we see not only faith in the future guidance of the Holy Spirit but also that humility which does not consider the knowledge hitherto attained by faith as final. Nor does the Catholic Church do this, a fact to which Newman especially has referred. Without this self-limitation, without a movement in the direction of others, without an unprejudiced proving of every new spiritual force and movement, even faith in the guidance of the Holy Spirit is impossible.

Ecumenism requires an *understanding* theology, by which we do not mean only an historical theology or a mere mutual religio-psychological understanding.

The Lausanne Conference of the Churches of the World has clearly stated that. It did not indeed try to adopt a unifying principle immediately but rather assumed as its first obligation the task of discovering just at what point we already do understand each other and where our differences lie. Alongside of this sympathetic theology another theology, "combatant," judging, polemical, normative and dogmatic, surely has its necessary function. It is the battle for that truth which has not simply been given us concretely and finally. But how could we make any progress with a purely polemical theology? And how can it justify its battle in the discussion with the other church so that to the latter also the battle will appear reasonable and essential?

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

A sympathetic theology, without which the Ecumenical Movement cannot get along, and which is not simply historical theology, seeks to understand not only the Word of God directed at one's own church, but also that addressed to another. To be sure, it is the same Word but, just because we cannot simply dispose of it by understanding it, we also dare not try to determine its effect in advance, that is, we dare not deal with God's Word as immanent or logical, as causally sequent or as determined by ourselves. We must rather leave the secret of this diverse effect to God and we must try to understand and account for it from the side of God, that is by faith and not from our own position, for example, from the point of view of a Christian-Hellenic, logical or ecclesiastical monism.

Otherwise there would arise the disagreeable and intolerable question: Why is the *one Christ* so misunderstood among Christians who know they are saved through Him and Him alone? Why is He so ambiguous and multifid in his working upon the human heart and thinking that He becomes the cause for division just as often as the reason for solidarity? Is the understanding of the Gospel, as it is interpreted by any one church in its particular doctrine, also this church's special *charisma*? Is it to be considered as a contribution to the general Christian store of knowledge in history and in the present or is this special knowledge a slight or marked deflection, an adumbration of the *one* great truth which was granted to the entire church?

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

At this point we see why, indeed, Barthianism preaches Christ as the Revealing one and yet, immediately after, sees in this revealer the hidden and veiling God who never really fully shows us the secret of His working upon our neighbor.

A sympathetic ecumenical theology will never deny that that God who wants to save the world, works mysteriously through His Spirit in other people, in other churches, in other theologies besides our own. The success, the effect, the receptivity for His truth and His influence, or the obstinacy of others, does not concern us now. That belongs to the human nature we all share. In a theology of Revelation we never begin with the "reaction" of man, but with the "action" of God. God speaks to me—that is what first strikes me. God, however, according to the testimony of the other person, also speaks to him, also to the other church, in a different way. That occurs to me at first as an offense, as a contradiction. We can either revolt against it or we can take it as a dialectical mystery, as the illumination of a universal truth modified by variations of time and place. God's time is a different time from that of the human spirit. We do not know at what time the God-given concern of the Reformers may also spring to life within the Catholic church or the Greek Orthodox church and within their forms of expression. We can only believe that this meeting with God has either occurred at some time, is now occurring in secret or some day will occur. Who could deny that?

A sympathetic ecumenical theology which naturally

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

proceeds from this belief does not aim primarily at understanding the other person, or rather the other churches, in their characteristic reaction, in their specific formulation of the divine summons and in their ecclesiastical or social obedience to God. The primary aim of this ecumenical theology is rather to understand the God who has also spoken thus to them, that in their situation, in their *Kairos* they had to answer in this particular way. Acknowledging this fact, we can for the present at least let all denominational hostility, all explanation of differences such as stubbornness, malice, enmity to Christ and unbelief go by the board. Even as in the case of the sinner, the individual of no belief, weak belief or false belief, we have to deal with God, so also in the case of the other churches, in spite of their supposed weakness or abridgment of faith, we have to deal with that God who speaks to us, with the selfsame Christ and the selfsame Holy Spirit.

It is due to the humility of a sympathetic ecumenical theology that it does not, from the very first, force its conceptions upon the other as being sure in its transmitted certainty of faith. It rather listens also to that which God has to say to the world through the channel of the other church. If we do not try to do this, then the other is also prevented from understanding what God has actually told *us*.

With this effort a new theological task is laid upon us, a proposition which until now has scarcely been faced. I should like to call it our translation problem.

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

Obviously not linguistic translation is meant, although even this leads us into the direction of theological problems. What is meant is the translation of the perceptions of faith out of the time and place of their origin into the medium which is intelligible to us. This holds true, above all, for the Lausanne Movement.

The work of the ecumenical movement of Stockholm, on the other hand, consists in translating problems that are apparently purely sociological into theological questions, into problems of conscience. That means only that God is being sought in the reality which meets us, and in the *Kairos* which has come upon us, after we have met God Himself in Christ. Not only do we seek Him in that reality attendant upon piety which tries to realize the moral and religious life, but we seek Him in the terrible and demoniacal reality of the world in which God does not appear to meet us at all. Since He is the saving God who has mercy upon the world, He must also be found there as the Hidden One, as the God of wrath, as the *deus absconditus*, who is present also in hell, as the Psalmist says, namely as an acting judgment, as the One who demonstrates the consequences of sin and leads this world into such distress and fear that it will again cry out for Him.

Into this world and with this faith, the theology of the Stockholm Conference enters. We here meet a reality which appears to be entirely deprived of God. We run across problems which are purely this-worldly

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

problems, psychological, sociological, political problems and which appear to be nothing more. First we find here only man and his distress, his wild, insane activity, his short-sighted and wilful thinking. But we dare not stop with these facts; we must dig so deep that the original connection between even this world and God again reveals itself, whether it be terrifying or comforting. There this reality will begin to speak, no longer only in its sociological language, in the language of economics, of politics, or of psychology, not only in the language of irresponsible things as laws unto themselves, but in the language of responsibility, in the language of the law of God, which is also hidden within things, in the language of a divine imperative. Wherever theology concerns itself with the world it dare not rest, until it has also found guilt in our own circle of life, until it has rediscovered forgotten responsibility and formulated it, until it hears the cry of creation which would like to be redeemed and until it once more beholds the relatedness to God of even an apparently Godless world, just because it has from the lips of Christ heard the words of compassion for the world.

An example for this work of translation is given us in Wuensch's *Ethics of Economics* or in the studies and documents<sup>\*</sup> of the Geneva Institute. Here is shown what socio-ethical, i.e., theological problems face us, theological problems growing out of such apparently purely technical problems as unemploy-

<sup>\*</sup> *Kirche und moderne Wirtschaftsgestaltung*, 1930.

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

ment, investment of capital, over-systematization and international industrial and labor agreements.

In the work of translation as it has been assumed by the Lausanne Movement, the real problem (granted that there is an ecumenical will) is how the particular knowledge and the confession of a church, the church's *charisma* and its demands, can be translated into the language, the psychology, the understanding and the theology of another church. For without this interpretation no understanding of the other church is possible and without this understanding no ecumenical will toward each other can result.

In this humble theological attempt, first of all to understand the other church as a *question*, as a question which God perhaps also addresses to us, and as a question which we are to translate into terms of our own individuality, we avoid that dangerous crag of an ecumenical theology which should be nothing more than a mere "minimum-theology," that is, the smallest circle of that common knowledge which had been gained by the mutual subtraction of all that is differentiating. We also avoid that other danger of an ecumenical theology which might perhaps be gained by a compromise and must be designated as theological syncretism. With such a compromise or such a synthesis there would always be connected somehow a theological sacrifice which would necessarily be not only a *sacrificium intellectus* but a *sacrificium conscientiae*, a *sacrificium veritatis*. It is dangerous, how-

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

ever, in the province of theology also, to do anything against one's conscience.

If, however, through the afore-mentioned work of interpretation and translation we place the theological conflicts upon a deeper level than the sphere of denominational polemics, so deep, in fact, that even in these conflicts we no longer stand merely before the forum of our own church but rather before the forum of the Christ, before His judging and saving Word, then we shall find ourselves on the way to a new "evangelical catholicity." This does not consist of a sort of minimum-theology, which is proclaimed as ecumenical theology because it represents the last, harmless remainder in which no more differences can be found. Nor does this new catholicity consist of an artificial theological synthesis, which would be nothing else than a theological compromise. This re-interpretation, this translation of our theological conflicts back into the ultimate conflict of man with God, this deeper grounding of the mutual theological thinking, out of the sphere of a purely intellectual conceivability and into the sphere of an "existential" theology, does, however, prepare the way for that truly ecumenical theology, which ensues when man despairs of himself and of his theological intellect, and when man comes to an ultimate trust in God's grace through Jesus Christ, and trust in the ever new guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The ecumenical movements, however, also constitute a problem for practical theology in so far as they

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

compel the churches to adjust themselves to each other at their respective borders, whether that adjustment be irenical or polemical.

This problem of the *frontier*, its defense, its removal and extension, can, in practical church politics and in the ecumenical intercourse between the churches, be considered or solved only by theology. Theology has set up the differentiating doctrines. These were developed by theology when in the churches' association with each other, in the quarrels with each other, in the fight against the heretics, they framed their creeds.

Theology always has been afraid of border violations and the wiping out of boundaries. It has actually been the frontier-guard of Christianity but has not always remained such. It attempted to fence off the human from the divine. It attempted to do that with regard to the other church and within its inherited faith. But the more we sense the hidden God in His concealment, the more we see that just because of this concealment the very definition of boundaries is impossible. Wherever we trespassed upon the boundaries of the churches, there open hostility between the churches has prevailed. There the anathema has resounded, the judgment of damnation, the *damnamus secus docentes*. Here, however, the sympathetic theology should first do its work before it gives way to that belligerent, dogmatical and intolerant theology which, to be sure, has its own legitimate work at the right time and at the right place.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

### THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT AS A QUESTION PUT TO THE CHURCHES

The Ecumenical Movement found the churches in an almost hostile seclusion behind their national and confessional walls. The old state- and national-church, hailing from the time of the *summi episcopi*, had exerted an isolating and narrowing influence. The church which has to preach a world-wide message and one superior to the world, has for the most part stopped abruptly at the boundary posts. And what is worse, the Ecumenical Movement often appears, even today, as a violation of boundaries. Just at this point it is exposed to criticism both national and confessional in certain church periodicals.<sup>22</sup>

(a) The Ecumenical Movement finds itself under the criticism of the newly awakening *national idea*. Particularly in Germany and among academic youth, this nationalistic criticism is clearly noticeable. Here, however, ecumenism is mistaken for a vague internationalism. The internationalism which we have today, and this is true of the League of Nations also, is in part an inverted nationalism which hopes to seize additional power from international connections. Ecumenism also can be used thus. But wherever it originates in the faith and hope of Christians it has nothing to do with such interests. In fact, ecumenism actually becomes a criticism of this internationalism

<sup>22</sup> I.e., in the *Allg. Ev. Luth. Kirchen-Blättern* and the *Ref. Kirchensitzung*.

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

which has its roots in a mere community of interests, just as it becomes a criticism of that exuberant nationalism which holds the idea of nationality dearer than all others. The sustaining faith of the Ecumenical Movement is this, that it springs from the spirit of Jesus Christ and not from any international, political or ecclesiastical interests, that it is derived from obedience to the Gospel and not from obedience to blood, to race, to nationality or to an idea.

The Ecumenical Movement will certainly recognize the legitimacy of the national idea, the individuality and the individual rights of every people. In ecumenical circles the dignity and the right of every single people to be respected has been contended for with special emphasis. In this sense the World Alliance for promoting Friendship between the Peoples through the Churches is active. The peace forces of the churches are being mobilized by it in behalf of peace and reconciliation among the nations. It is ecumenism that fights for general disarmament, international justice and understanding. At this point also the nationalistic criticism of the Ecumenical Movement can be disarmed by reference to the declaration of the American Federal Council of Churches, which for example refuses to believe that Germany alone was guilty in the World War. One can also refer to that which the ecumenically thinking youth movement achieved in the Cleveland Declarations. But even when ecumenism champions a threatened or wronged nation, it never permits itself

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

to be used in the interests of a one-sided nationalism.

Ecumenism will therefore exercise a resolute critical influence against every nationalistic narrowing of evangelical thought, also against that nationalistic and ecclesiastical nominalism which can see ultimate truths only in national churches and denies every fellowship that extends beyond the nation as a mere abstraction, a mere nomen.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of ecumenism, therefore, is not the weakening of a justifiable national sense but, on the contrary, its deepening. It aims at whetting the latter's sense of responsibility, at sifting it down in the sense of a constant reflection upon the limitations and weaknesses of one's own nation. It further reminds nationalism of the contribution it ought to make to human society, of the great common tasks which no nation is in a position to fulfill alone and which, especially today, in the present interdependence of the world, have become so imperative, particularly from the socio-ethical viewpoint. "Right or wrong my country," is a sub-Christian viewpoint. When for instance, the American churches not only make general declarations in behalf of peace, but make very concrete demands for the preservation of peace—the defense of minorities, the control of foreign investments of capital, the more equitable dis-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. The recent comments of Althaus and Hirsch and their critics, Deissmann, Rade, K. L. Schmidt, *Theologische Blaetter*, 1931. *Christliche Welt*, 1931.

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

tribution of raw materials, the more reasonable adjustment of the immigration regulations—they are the demands of a super-national, a Christian conscience. They are demands intended, when realized, to redound to the good of just such nations as are threatened, disinherited and wronged, and this in the name of an ecumenism which understands Christian society not only as eschatological but as the never-ending, present and practical task of universal Christendom in all the nations.

The Ecumenical Movement, therefore, is a problem addressed to the church. The church must decide whether it actually wants peace among the nations, whether it desires to give first place to the fellowship of blood or the fellowship of the Spirit, whether it also really believes in the Gospel's power to unite the peoples of the earth.

(b) A second difficulty confronts Ecumenism when it faces confessionalism, i.e., the kind of church which refuses all fellowship with others on confessional grounds. To this confessionalism the Ecumenical Movement appears as the danger of a vague latitudinarianism, a confessional characterlessness, a temptation to disloyalty toward the transmitted historical heritage, as the instigation to an unpermitted and dangerous tolerance. Confessionalism fears that from the Ecumenical Movement there will result but a beclouded fusion of the churches, a confusion of clear, definite viewpoints and a minimum-theology which would represent a serious curtailment of the knowl-

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

edge that had been gained. In this fear there lies much of loyalty and love for that which God has granted to a church or confession as its special *charisma*. From this viewpoint church union, made apparent in any way at all, appears neither desirable nor possible. This union remains but an article of faith, and in this case all obligation in any way to affirm its content or to work for its realization would be firmly renounced.

Here, indeed, a distinction must be made between the Ecumenical Movement of Lausanne, which seeks as its highest aim the union of the church in faith and order, and that of Stockholm which, in consideration of the difficulty involved in the efforts at union and the difficulty presented by imperative practical needs, is contented for the time being with the formation of a working fellowship of the churches without, however, declaring matters of faith to be without significance.

The problem which Lausanne presents to confessionalism is naturally much more acute and difficult, for here the question at once arises whether the expected dogmatical unity can be effected by absorption, by synthesis or by an ecumenical minimum-theology. All three possibilities are alike intolerable to a self-conscious confessionalism. No church can allow itself to be absorbed by another as long as it believes itself to possess the Word of God in a special sense. Just as odious to a confessional church is a compromise type of theology, which would have

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

to result from some synthesis of various confessions. The third possibility, an ecumenical theology in which a hazy Christianity, lacking character and historical stamp, would result by reducing confessional expression to a minimum, is of no significance whatever.

In spite of this, one need not despair of an ecumenical theology which might ensue from either a return to the original common source of the confessions, from the advance to a new religious comprehension of the distinguishing doctrines, from a deeper understanding of the religious motives involved in them, or from establishing the theological conflict on the deeper level of an ultimate "existential" formulation of the God-relation. Let this complex network of problems, however, remain <sup>\*\*</sup> the theological task of the Lausanne Conference which is an abiding source of hope so long as the confession is not considered as something ultimate but only penultimate, and so long as in the presence of the historical confession or church, the larger common cause of our God is not forgotten—that common cause concerning which the denominations are conversing with each other.

For the Stockholm Movement the question of confessionalism is troublesome only when it is asserted that for the performance of common practical tasks there is also necessary a certain minimum of universally accepted doctrine. The contention that a fellowship of labor is impossible without a fellowship of

<sup>\*\*</sup> Sasse, *d. Weltkirchenkonferenz f. Glaube u. Verfassung*. Furche, 1927.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

faith does not apply to Stockholm. It is a rather gross distortion of the truth when it is said that Stockholm, without any concern for this fellowship of faith, immediately plunged into practical activity. To be sure, Stockholm did not grow out of any dogmatics but out of the conviction that the only help in the social distress of the present is to be found in the Gospel, that repentance, faith and obedience essentially belong to the appropriation of this proffered salvation, that Jesus Christ is Lord indeed, not only of the inner life but also of the life in human society. Stockholm grew out of the belief in a coming Kingdom of God which implies the judgment and transformation of this world. That is sufficiently clear on the face of the official Stockholm documents.

Stockholm<sup>4</sup> did not set up a creed of its own, because it recognizes the already existing creeds of the churches affiliated with its program. It has only given these creeds a more exact exposition respecting those phases of life concerning which the church had not previously declared its creedal position. But the responsibility for setting up a creed did not fall on Stockholm at all; it was a fellowship of service. The formulation of creeds is and will remain the function of the church and not the work of independent organizations, practical associations for coöperation, and church federations. What Stockholm has created is a coöperative fellowship with special means for the

<sup>4</sup> Deissmann, *Die Stockholm Welt Kirchenkonferenz*, Furche, 1926.

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

solution of those urgent common problems which must be met as problems of faith, that is, in a practical obedience to a recognized divine command.

If the confessionalism of today should wish to base the practical fellowship of service solely upon a fellowship of belief, most of the denominations would immediately fall into separate groups, because none reveal such uniformity in the acceptance and interpretation of the creed but that it is necessary for them to tolerate different parties or groups within their midst and unite them in coöperative work. Wher-ever confessionalism acknowledges a duty of the churches toward the world, it can exist only in obedience to the faith granted to it, that is, in keeping the divine commands where, at definite places and at a definite time, these are concretely addressed to it. Wherever this occurs and is recognized with the will to obey, there immediately arises out of the selfsame spirit a fellowship of service which compels us to hear the Word, and this spirit continues its work in urging us to be obedient to the divine will.

This line of thought contains certain questions which the church is required to answer. The first is this: Does the church remember that the Kingdom of God is not of this world? That therefore it also has nothing to do with our ideas, our love of power, our political ideals and our national aspirations? Now, indeed, the church and the Kingdom of Christ are not the same. But does the church not move in the direction of this Kingdom? Is the church waiting for

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

the Kingdom or does it wish to get away from it? Does the church want to make itself so comfortable in the world, in a given country, in a man-made political and social structure, in a national civilization, that it no longer senses any need for that which lies beyond all of that which has historically developed? Let it take heed lest it resemble Dostoievski's Grand Inquisitor in that it sends Jesus out of the country and out of the province of an exclusive national civilization and bolts the door against His message concerning a fellowship of God's children. Obviously, of course, the Ecumenical Movement is not this fellowship. It, too, merely points toward it. And yet it is a recognition of the fact that the fellowship of Jesus Christ is larger and more comprehensive than the human fellowship on earth which springs from blood, that this fellowship is richer in intensity than the association formed because of the needs of law and morality. The innermost relation obtaining between the members of a church fellowship and between the Christian churches is not based upon ethical commands and principles, but upon the forgiveness of sins and, above all, upon the call to repentance which applies to all. The question consequently is: Does the church in its relations to the churches of other peoples want to base itself on law and ethics or on the ground of faith? The Ecumenical Movement asks this question of the churches.

Another question is: Do the churches believe that their confessional expressions are the divine and final

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

truth?—those formulations which have grown out of a polemical situation and were not free of political considerations (think, for example, of Marburg and the interests of Philip of Hesse), formulations in many respects dependent upon the theological scholarship of a particular period, and influenced by the spiritual uniqueness of their representatives. In all these differentiating formulæ is the question always only one of truth and never, at least to some extent, one of psychology? Let us, for instance, by means of Walter Koehler's fine presentation of the Marburg Discussion, feel our way carefully into the mental processes, into the daily fluctuations of mood, into the tendency both toward compromise and toward stubbornness, into the consideration of the invisible audience, into the reasons which led either to concessory or more hostile formulæ. The Ecumenical Movement, without denying that at certain points final and separating distinctions are being dropped, asks the church whether it desires to perpetuate all those contingencies, those non-essentials, psychological reflections and influences which find their origin in custom, culture and the intellect. It asks whether the church does not wish to deal with this problem of church fellowship at least dialectically, that is, with a "Yes" as well as with a "No." The "No" expressed in the various differing forms of spiritual battle for final truth is as much a real part of the Ecumenical Movement as is the "Yes." The "No" which condemns the human frailties and in-

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

dolences, even of the individual church, must certainly be heard, but also the "Yes" which accepts the fellowship which God, nevertheless, gives us. The "No" is the expression of a definite situation. The "Yes" is the expression of faith which does not concern itself with situations, but with eternity. Many American churches were divided because of the slavery question, not because of their faith. The slavery question has long since been settled. But the after-effect of this situation of a particular political period is still felt. It is indisputable that the Anglican church of today would no longer expel the Methodists and that it regrets the "No" with which it replied to them at that time. At the ecumenical conferences the "No" between Lutherans and Reformed no longer sounds so harsh. Both of them stand for the *sola fide* against every kind of salvation by works. Both represent the spirituality of the operation of grace over against any naturalistic sacramental magic. They both defend the principle of a universal priesthood of men as against hierarchical claims. In view of the differences between the churches, differences which appear and disappear (there are also final and abiding ones hidden in the mystery of God), the question which the Ecumenical Movement puts to the churches is, whether they think in terms of time or eternity.

Another question which the Ecumenical Movement asks the churches is, whether they themselves believe their own creed, particularly the clause "I believe in the one holy universal Church?" Or

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

rather, the question is what the churches understand by this statement. Do they mean to escape into the invisible church? Do they mean the mystical or abstract concept of an invisible church or that realism which is determined by the Incarnation? The question is whether the church is the body of Christ, or a society erected upon our will, our individuality, our theological subtleties and personal decisions.

A last practical question is put to the church by the Ecumenical Movement, namely, the question whether it is able to do what it wants to do. All churches are today confronted with problems of such dimensions as transcend by far the ability of any one of them. The social question is of world-wide proportions. No single church can measure up to its obligations. None can evade it. It meets every church with the destiny-determining force of a *Kairos*. It demands from each one such study, such a decision, such an effort, such action as no one church alone can accomplish. By this we do not mean to say that the churches even in their totality and by their coöperation can measure up to this problem. And yet insight, the world's "wisdom of serpents" as well as the simplicity of faith manifested in the children of light, constrains us unitedly to attempt what is individually beyond us. And this we should do, not because of any megalomania but because the New Testament itself points out this way (John 17).

The work in behalf of world peace is no lesser problem. But this is no task for one congregation, for

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

one little church. It is the task of all Christianity. The powers of evil knit themselves together easily and closely. The financial powers, international capitalism, the alcohol trade, the white-slave trade, have long united their forces and are successful because they are one. The churches to a large extent are weak and ineffective because they are not united and do not will to do anything with the collective power of a unified will born of the Spirit. One might therefore also put the question thus: Do the churches believe in the Holy Spirit? He sets before them such momentous tasks in order that, by facing them, they may become united. Each individual church must, therefore, recognize its impotence in the face of these problems.

Even though, however, the churches do not see these new tasks which the Spirit places upon them, the free Christian organizations outside the church are attacking them all the more eagerly. Many of them are sponsors and advocates of the Ecumenical Movement.

Christian Youth today are thinking and working in the ecumenical sense. The great world organizations of young men's and young women's societies, of students, have ecumenical commissions and are busying themselves with ecumenical tasks and problems. Foreign mission work which in Europe, to a large extent, is not the work of the organized churches, has in its special field realized the ecumenical idea in the organization of an International Mis-

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

sionary Council of Christianity. Foreign mission work appears no longer as the special task of an individual church or society (though it is still carried on thus for practical and other reasons), but as the great, common and unified obligation of the Christian world to the non-Christian. The work of salvaging the lost at home ("Home Missions") has likewise come to understand that it can no longer work in an isolated corner, with the single victim who lies wounded in the street, but that it has a world task. It therefore is striving to get away from all narrow circles in order to harness together the powers of love in all the churches to a common work, as this is attempted, for instance, in the International Association of "Home Missions," which has also joined with the Stockholm Movement. It is of the utmost importance that these free Christian coöperative societies, which had almost developed into a type of special church, reëstablish their connection with the church in this coöperative enterprise and that they understand their activity as a duty within this universal church.

## THE DISCUSSION WITH BARTHIANISM

Barthianism can no more evade the Ecumenical Movement than the latter can evade Barthianism. In so far as Barthianism does not proceed from a definite historical theology but from a viewpoint above churches and confessions, above nations and theologies, and inasmuch as it claims to present a "crisis"

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

to every historical church and theology, it becomes, whether it will or no, a sort of parallel movement to Ecumenism. It meets the Ecumenical Movement as a whole, not only as every church meets it in particular single problems, but in a manner which lies deeper than the confessional and the factional theological problems which have hitherto stirred or divided the churches. Discussion is therefore inevitable and has, in fact, already begun. The place, however, has not as yet been found where a profitable discussion can begin, for there is not yet a general understanding of what the Ecumenical Movement as a whole really is. The Ecumenical Movement is struggling with misunderstandings, just as the dialectic theology is. This cannot be otherwise, for the Ecumenical Movement is not a concept, system, unified organization, self-conscious purpose, but rather movement, need, longing, dynamic of faith, trust in the guidance of the Spirit, open-mindedness and obedience to the demand of a divine inspiration.

Barthianism opposes the Ecumenical Movement for deeper reasons than nationalism or confessionalism or pietistic individualism.

The picture which Barthianism draws of the present Ecumenical Movement is somewhat inadequate. One notices distinctly that the picture is not formed on the basis of careful consideration of the movement. It is not based upon a thoroughgoing knowledge, but upon a fundamental prejudice, upon a criticism of

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

particular phases which are indeed provocative. The picture is distorted because of a preoccupation with the weaknesses and shortcomings of the Ecumenical Movement and is not formed by a more profound insight into the essence of Stockholm's act of faith. It is not formed by reverence for the hidden God, whose Spirit may perhaps also be present in this work of man. To most of the leading Barthians (except a group of younger men), the Lausanne Movement appears as Christian *hybris*, and Stockholm appears as mere ideology or meaningless exertion of will, or, as one of the young disciples of Barth said, as "the kiss with which the Church betrays the Gospel to a program of culture." The question regarding the Christian right of these movements to exist is asked with great sharpness, especially by Gogarten.<sup>6</sup> He reproaches the church with sticking its head into the sand of "Stockholm's and Lausanne's evangelical programs of civilization."

It is exceedingly important that the Ecumenical Movement seriously consider the Barthian point of view. It is, however, to be hoped that Barthianism will also sense the seriousness of the questions raised by the ecumenical attitude.

Having thus disposed of the ecumenical questions, we may now ask what the dialectical questions are. They are to be found especially in Karl Barth's lecture on the distress of the evangelical church which

<sup>6</sup> *Die Schuld der Kirche wider die Welt.*

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

was recently published in the journal *Zwischen den Zeiten*.\*

The question which is there addressed to the church, and particularly to the Ecumenical Movement, is: Does the church find itself in distress, not only with reference to its accidental situations, but in that distress which is "essential" to it? If it is not in spiritual distress it is not an evangelical church. If, therefore, the Ecumenical Movement, which is indeed but an expression of the life that is in the churches, is not also an expression of this "essential" distress of the churches carrying their cross, it is untrue to its nature. It is the distress caused by the recognition of the fact that, during the Reformation, "the crucified Christ was shut out, rejected and condemned by the one church which then existed." Christ's crucifixion and rejection is the fundamental conviction of the evangelical church and constitutes its "distress." Only in the form of the Crucified One is Christ the divine life of the church, and not "as a mighty organizing principle of an actual elevation of man into the sphere of the divine" (see above).

In addition to this essential distress Barth speaks of a second "non-essential and non-beneficial" distress of the church in its present existence. According to him this originates in the withdrawal from that which is essentially demanded of the church. The church withdraws before its own concreteness. It should indeed be concrete in a very definite way.

\* *Zwischen den Zeiten*, No. 2, 1931.

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

Wherever it becomes concrete as something human, form and essence are cloven apart and no synthesis is possible. "The Kingdom of Heaven and the Prussian General Synod" cannot imply the same thing even though they be spoken of as the same. Catholicism knows such a synthesis, but the evangelical church does not. The latter knows only that synthesis which God alone creates between that which is so very human and the divine reality.

In observing the churches which have entered the Ecumenical Movement the second distress certainly deserves primary attention, namely, the "non-essential distress" of their accidental situations. Distress, as has been said, is one of the roots of the Ecumenical Movement. It has, however, been not only this "non-essential distress" which has led the churches together in a common repentance and to a new obedience. For just in this state lay a protest against the former contingencies of the church's existence. It was a criticism of the church-world's being, as it was, a church-world which withdrew from a very definite requirement of its nature and which no longer risked giving any indication of this particular nature. This church-world preferred rather to flee into an invisible principle and into the imperfect, all too visible provincial church. "The flight before the invisible into the visible church," according to Barth, "has nothing to do with the vital situation of man who is confronted with the crucified Christ." But wherever the church tries to be visible in the midst of a concrete world, there the

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

immense cleavages between form and substance immediately reveal themselves. It is the cleavage between that which the church intends and that which it says and does. Here its shortcomings are immediately evident.

But precisely in connection with this cleavage Barth emphasizes that it is the church of sinners and that its very weakness and assailability is a sign "that that God who once has entered human frailty, is present and is to be proclaimed and heard here at this very point."

Why should not this meaning of the church's weakness, which belongs to its essential aspect, also be found in the Ecumenical Movement? What one sees is indeed weakness. No one knows that any better than those that are in it. In the very movement toward one another the contrast between the churches is made manifest, the mutual tenseness and criticism, the slothfulness of heart and of faith. The movement reveals the entire problematics of the present-day situation, instead of offering a solution. It points to ruins and to the building material which lies all around, but there is no construction as yet. It is a battle against the church as it is, against the church's narrowness and indolence, against any denominational or confessional nationalism, against the church's dismemberment but also against dictatorial demands for unity. Size, glory, successes, consciousness of power and self-consciousness are not found

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

here. The real comfort, which is actually to be found in this excessive humanness, in this poverty, weakness and insufficiency of the church's visibility, in this condition of being torn asunder, striving to come together and yet not getting together, is, nevertheless, that this selfsame God, who laid His Son in a stable for us, must be active, and in this very lowness still is with us. This spiritual frame of mind, this comfort, this faith of Stockholm, is of course not to be found in any statute or in any document. But it comes to them who are convinced that God appears in concealment and lowness.

Karl Barth will be able to accept this on one condition, that the first, the "essential distress" of the evangelical church, the distress of the cross, be rightly understood and perceived. I dare not generally assert that this is to be found everywhere. I can only describe, even as Barth himself, what I see before me. There is noticeable in some churches a feeling of security, a dream of power and influence upon the world where they prosper, a will to fashion, a will that believes it can transform, evangelize and socialize the world. There can be seen a feeling of power which grows out of a consciousness of possession and of a task, self-consciousness in national and denominational form, an ability to organize and an activity which refers to deeds—all of which is certainly far removed from the church which is under the cross and which bears the shame of Christ. But how strange! Wher-

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

ever these bearers of power, of dignities and of the Spirit, wherever these organizers and leaders in the midst of their consciousness of spirituality and of power are confronted by the question of the cross and are struck by it (at union services, for example), there not proud defense nor the triumphant reference to accomplishments and successes would arise, but, on the contrary, the consciousness of Christ's shame and of the necessity that His church ever live under the cross. I have not yet heard from the lips of any one the ban of the Grand Inquisitor when Jesus, actually Jesus, stood before the speaker.

In spite of all the church's dullness and superficiality, in spite of the consciousness of power and the love of organization we meet in it, we may, after the paradoxical fashion of faith, yet assume that somehow beneath the surface there is present that more profound and essential distress. Again and again it is the "I believe, Lord, help thou my unbelief," which is audible in all faith, despite its self-consciousness. "I obey, Lord, help thou my disobedience," is the soft, oftentimes rather unconscious petition heard amid all the visible activity, to which also the churches of the Ecumenical Movement feel themselves summoned. It is an evident unbelief and disobedience which speaks thus, actually unbelief and disobedience as viewed by God? I should think that at this point Barthianism with its questions ought to do the Ecumenical Movement the service of rendering the "essential" distress perceptible in the "non-

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

good" distress. It ought, however, within the church and within the human limits of the Ecumenical Movement, to believe in the operation of a hidden God, who in this very paradoxical fashion desires to work in this "very human cause." Not only the Christian, but also the church, also the Ecumenical Movement, may well confess that God's strength is made perfect in weakness. Surely, however, to this weakness belong not only poverty and impotence but, seen from a deeper viewpoint, also that would-be-important hustle and bustle, that pride and joy attending success, that chattering and stuttering, as well as church politics and so many other things bearing the stamp of this world.

The Ecumenical Movement today has special need of the faith that God is strong in the weak.

After half a decade, as Archbishop Soederblom said, a critical period arises for most movements, in which there is danger that the movement will become an organization. There is danger that the questioning and unsteady, feeling step will become a confident and safe, forward stride. There is a temptation to measure and test the possibilities of man and the church. Methods are put in place of the distress and the cry from the depths. There is danger of believing in the power of "efficiency" and "coöperation," of considering as accomplishment what was once an act of repentance and faith. A movement realizes, even as do the churches, that a spiritual inspiration does not become a possession, but that it is rather to

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

be obtained under the pressure and in the mystery of a divine dynamics.

The second question which Barthianism puts to the church, and therefore also to the Ecumenical Movement, concerns the justification and the meaning of the new Christian realism which today, in the "century of the church," has made its appearance, demanding form, authority, visibility and activity; it demands concrete activity, political action and social expression. This question is subdivided into several others. They are as follows: Why does the church occupy itself only with the general problem dealing with its visible existence instead of inquiring after its own particular existence? Why does it confuse creedal statement and historical observation? Why does it not, with deep concern, gaze out upon the eschatological horizon? Why does one inquire concerning the existence rather than the nature of the church? Why does it express itself so concretely in the matter of its possessing the Gospel? "What, indeed, does 'having' mean when it is used with regard to the Gospel? Surely it does not mean to have it in one's pocket or one's barn, nor does it mean to have it in one's head or in the depths of one's conscience." The certainty of having salvation is thus criticized. The church claims to have knowledge of the "Way," the methods, the social and national prescriptions, the possibilities of gaining power—all of which are held up to the church as evidence that its "having" in fact betrays a "not-having," its repentance is not sin-

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

cere, not a cry from out of the depths; it has an answer before the question has been correctly asked; it considers the problem of power more important than the question concerning the Kingdom of God and therefore it also establishes far too close a connection between what is evangelical and what is national.

We cannot here concern ourselves with answering these questions in detail, because this fundamental question is indeed a living one in the Ecumenical Movement itself. Perhaps this question is not so vital to every single church dignitary, not to every technical commission, but it surely is in the movement as a whole, in its origin, in its spiritually sensitive spots, at its points of greatest height and depth. This is to be seen, for example, in the movement's services of worship, where the conferences are not confronted with immediate, concrete and technical tasks but with the call of God, with the distress of a whole world, with the cry of the church folk in all lands. There is demanded of the churches not only the same old Gospel message, but a message for today, a definite decision in the burning problems of the present, indeed, therefore, a Christian Realism.

This realism is no new message, no new Gospel, but the searching for an answer to the question as to what the old Gospel means in our day with its peculiar social and international problems. It desires to know what decisions, what answers the old Gospel demands of us in this present *Kairos*, this moment so laden with destiny at this turning point of the world's

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

history. For the first time this question is addressed by the Ecumenical Movement, not only to individual Christians or churches but to the whole of Christianity.

The question is certainly justified whether this realism originates in the mere human impulse to activity, or in a mere church ideology, as Gogarten says, in the church's desire for power, for organization and influence, or whether it originates in a more careful listening for the Word of God to our day, or out of the will to obey. This question belongs rather to that constant self-criticism which Barthianism insistently demands of the church.

But no one knows, not even Barthianism, only God alone. Just as little as one can, according to Barthian doctrine, determine whether a person is a Christian on the basis of his human or ethical conduct, so little can the inner seriousness of these questions be learned from the external activity of the churches or the Ecumenical Movement. There is no criterion—not for Barthianism either—for the inner attitude of a Christian or a church to God, unless one make use of the idea of the fruits of the Spirit. The modern psychology of the unconscious here furnishes Barthianism with the proof of this judgment from experience itself. This psychology of "compensation" has realized that the empirical and spiritual facts in our experience are not decisive for the determination of spiritual reality.

The psychology of "compensation" has taught that it is advisable when judging man, to begin with the

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

opposite of that which he represents, or says, or pretends to be. Experience shows that the proud and vain man oftentimes feels himself inwardly as a weak man, that the shy person indulges in imaginations of greatness, that the moral fanatic suffers from impure dreams which he combats by means of their opposite, that the unapproachable has a precarious longing for love and that the atheist is really sometimes a seeker after God. Much talk about the church's power, much ecclesiastical and theological self-consciousness, much certainty has to be considered from this angle. It may be just the reverse side of an inner emptiness and poverty, the concealment of a bad conscience, a shame which does not know how else to express this emptiness but through its opposite. On the other hand it is not at all certain but that in constant speaking of distress and human uncertainty the definite self-assurance of a "theology of distress" becomes evident.

This does not imply anything more than is also taught by Dostoievski and Barthianism: "that only sin is manifest but not the true relation of man to God." And so, in fact, there is evident only the weakness of the Ecumenical Movement, that is, the slowness and indolence of the churches, the disharmony and cleavage, the lack of courage.

To what extent all ecumenical work is supported by true repentance, by faith, by eschatological hope, that is, to what extent also the church is in earnest with its praying, its thinking, its striving and its

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

acting is quite beyond our knowledge. Even as according to the Barthian view, the Christian is known to God alone, so also this earnestness of the church or the lack of it is known only to God. Just at this point many would be grateful to Barthianism if, accordingly, their own judgment on individuals and churches did not resound so loud and certain.

A knowledge of the Ecumenical Movement reveals with striking force the terrible inner struggle through which the churches of today are passing. By that I do not mean their fear of collapse, nor the hunger in Transylvanian parsonages, nor the crying of Jugoslavian orphans, nor the starving of Hungarian students, nor the concern for the evangelical schools in the East-European churches, nor the needs of the innumerable institutions of Christian benevolence, but I do mean that fundamental distress which expresses itself in the grave concern for the church, the profound anxiety for the preservation of its message, the penitence because of the church's guilt, the complete uncertainty regarding its inner fate, the "hope of despair" in the midst of its crushed condition. This is not to be gathered from the releases of boards or conference reports. But one does hear it in the solitary parsonages of Poland and Jugoslavia, and when one meets with church leaders in Hungary and Roumania, in Belgium, France and Italy. One may also hear it in Germany and in Switzerland, in the North and in England. One hears it from lay-

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

men who love the church and who despair because of it. But one may also hear it from bishops. One even hears it in proud and sated America, whose far-reaching official utterances betray so much of security and self-confidence. The soul's distress is seen to vibrate here and there even in the activism indicated, and in the midst of church activity a feeling overtakes man that salvation cannot issue from this, not from the size and the power of the church, but solely through a miracle of God, through his compassion for the world. Karl Barth speaks too restrictedly from within the environment of a limited church life, from within a national, ecclesiastical situation and its resultant psychology. The more he enters and works himself into the ecumenical world the more he will also have opportunity to feel this "essential" distress of the church. The essential element which he preaches and demands is heard and understood, in spite of theological repulsion and official attack, to a far greater extent than he knows, if not in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, then at least far and wide among the preachers who are indeed the most impenitent of all, and what is more, to a large extent among the laity of all churches where over-theologizing and over-politicizing of the church's message have not yet wrought such devastation as Barth finds in "churchianity." Besides, one can also ask whether its representatives in their very administration, in their ecclesiastical work, in the struggle of their daily grind have not taken upon themselves something of a very

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

*passio vicaria* in order that theologians and prophets may continue in their calling.

Whether, therefore, this new realism rests upon the right kind of earnestness, whether it is, in fact, a realism of faith, is not to be ascertained either by criticism or experience.

This realism in itself Barth would allow and he would understand it as the "earnest laying hold of the church tasks, a modest contenting one's self, an obedient taking of one's right place," and he would, if indeed it were this, take back his *quo usque*. Brunner and Tillich have from the beginning evidenced an understanding of the concreteness of the tasks set before this realism. The former has meanwhile published an ethics<sup>1</sup> in which full attention is given, particularly to the concrete economico-ethical obligations, strange to say, without considering the common social thinking and the world-wide social effort of Stockholm.

The differences between the Ecumenical Movement and Barthianism, however, not only concern the sincerity of this Christian realism but its motive and aim as well. They do not grow out of the questions: How can we gain power and influence? How can we build a larger and more influential church? How can we carry out a specific program? But the question is rather: *What is the will of God in our day?* How can the churches recognize this Will? What, pray tell, shall we do after we have heard the Word? How

<sup>1</sup> Brunner, *Das Gebot und die Ordnungen*. H. B. Mohr, 1932.

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

does faith become obedience? And where in quite concrete situations have we been summoned by faith to obedience?

With this fundamental question about the will of God in the *Kairos* of a turning point in the world's history, a profound common problem ought to be found on the part of the Ecumenical Movement as well as of Barthianism. Beside this fundamental question all other questions of a theological, administrative or technical nature are secondary. This question about the will of God is so essential in both movements that one may well overlook the human elements which are found in both. Where one inquires thus in all seriousness from out of the dire distress of the day, it may be assumed that a getting-together and a working-together becomes not only possible but imperative.

Barthianism then, like every evangelical theology, will be really bound to keep this fundamental question alive in the church and in the Ecumenical Movement; it will be bound to warn the church against nationalism and self-confident confessionalism, against Pelagian activism as well as a pietistic retreat from the world, against ritualism and hierarchism and then, again and again, it must lead the church back from its flight into the world or into unworldliness and remind it of the holy concern expressed in the petition: *Thy will be done!*

The Ecumenical Movement (that of Stockholm especially, in this particular respect) will, on the

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

other hand, have to remind all theology, that in all hearing of the Word, in all the seriousness of listening, the chief concern must ever be the *doing* of the divine will, that is *obedience* on our part. What is demanded is a naked, simple, immediate obedience without any reflecting theology, without having an eye on rewards or merits.

But what the will of God may be in any single concrete case is not to be ascertained simply on the basis of any law given once for all, nor from Christian experience, nor from the inner voice. The dynamics of the divine will cannot be retained in the statics of any human knowledge. Consequently, neither an unambiguous eternally valid theological system, nor any final form of church organization, nor a ready-made social program can be found in the Gospel. The Christian and the churches cannot thus, once for all, control the divine will. It can be recognized only when in the *Kairos* of a concrete situation we are ready to hear the Word of God and when we are prepared to obey just in this very situation with its special claims upon our demanded surrender.

When a hundred years ago the work of missions and the fight against slavery confronted faith as duties, they were not understood by all churches clearly and unmistakably to be the will of God. They were first seen as such in the act of an "existential" meeting with the condemning and the commanding God.

Today there are three such concrete provinces in

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

life, where the churches are seeking to know the will of God. They are to be found in the work for world peace, in efforts to meet the social question and in the inquiry after the object and function of the family. Are we here discovering the will of God? Does the church recognize it as such? How does the church formulate it in the language of the day and of men who are without leadership? How can the decisions of our obedience be reached in any concrete instance from the fact of the Word, heard and incarnate?

In such questioning, which has to arise out of the very hearing of the Word, insights dawn upon one which make for fellowship among the churches, that is, they function ecumenically.

First of all comes the discovery that the three problems mentioned are so far beyond all previous calculations that they can no longer remain questions of a single person or a single church. They are problems of entire Christendom. Quite apart from considering whether a solution can be found or not, the actual magnitude and importance of these problems cannot be comprehended by any one church. They cannot in all their implications be recognized as common guilt; they cannot be formulated in all their complexity; in their demoniacal power of resistance they cannot even be grasped. The entire ecumenical world is necessary for this, its common faith, its common hope, its common obedience.

A second discovery is the realization that for the church also the problems of this realism are not

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

to be solved or even formulated by theology alone. The facts underlying the peace problem, the social question and the sex problem have indeed an *Eigengesetzlichkeit*, i.e., a law unto themselves, a nature which belongs to the world itself, a world that is estranged from and inimical to God. The God who holds and sustains this world as it is, is really a hidden God. It appears to be the devil's rather than God's world. Whatever is the will of God in the constitution of our political situation, as also in the reconstruction of our society, appears completely smothered beneath the *Eigengesetzlichkeit* of the world. It is the special task of that realism to understand what this apparent *Eigengesetzlichkeit* of the world actually consists of, where it is to subordinate itself and yield to the divine will. For this realism knows full well that the divine summons has simultaneously placed man before a practical task in this cruel world of "self-governing" facts, because here, precisely here, His will should be done and should triumph. The Stockholm Conference and its Institute therefore occupy themselves with these facts, not in order to plunge themselves into some superficial activity but in order to take seriously the prayer: "Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven." It reveals, amid shame and distress of soul, that this will according to our conception of the Word obviously is not being done in that sphere of life which we designate by its own concepts, such as economic law, unemployment, industrialization, etc. An idealistically

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

minded Christianity has easily overlooked it. The new realism attempts first of all to expose this cleft concretely in all of its acuteness, and it consequently deepens not only its comprehension of the absolute divine demand, but also its religious insight into the demoniac, sinful nature of the world, so hostile to God. But then this realism seeks to proclaim and to represent the divine demand in the world just as "existentially" and concretely as sin itself is to be recognized and confessed in the concrete circumstances of our life. This does not mean, however, that God's eternal will—always only partially revealed to us—should be too concretely formulated and codified in demands and commands.<sup>8</sup>

The Stockholm Movement concerns itself only with the transposition and application of the hearing of this message in some particular practical field. The hearing of the Word, obedience, which in spite of the soul's distress and helplessness, strives to do that which God demands of us in any given moment, even to the extent of sacrificing our very selves, or our social order, or our church system—this is the essential thing. Everything else is secondary, natural consequence, means to an end, necessary technique, instrument, intellectual work. In this sense Stockholm

<sup>8</sup> Note the difference between the last publications of the Institute, *Die sozialen Programme der Kirchen*, Wanderer, 1930, and the latest treatise *Kirche und moderne Wirtschaftsgestaltung*, Geneva Institute, 1931, published by the Ev. Presseverband, Berlin. An advance is quite evident from the social idealism, which characterizes several of those programs, to a Christian social realism which takes the demands as well as the facts more seriously and conscientiously.

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

and its Institute does a work of translation for the churches and does it by their order. It is a translation not from one language into another, a translation not only of one church life into the motivation of another for the purpose of mutual understanding, but it is a translation of the Word into the language of a concrete demand, a translation of the reality in which we live into our theological, ethical and ecclesiastico-social problematics. The one distinguishing mark in all this is faith in God's coming Kingdom.

There is in all this the earnest expression of a deep uneasiness because of the conviction that with respect to the plain Word of Scripture we have, in many provinces of life, remained but hearers of the Word and have not become doers of it, that until now an essential part of our faith has been lacking, namely, *obedience*.

These are realizations and demands which are appearing and will successfully establish themselves in the same manner and in Barthianism, necessarily, as well as in the Ecumenical Movement. The tension existing between the two, therefore, appears to me as artificial, and not as arising from a view of reality and from a perception of the nature of the actual objectives of both movements. A more thorough discussion and coöperation is consequently imperatively desirable. This can begin immediately and is in fact already in progress. It may be summarized in the following instances.

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

The first in our consideration is the Cause itself, that is, the Word of God addressed to man. If understood correctly there is no other question in the Ecumenical as well as the Barthian movement. There is only the concern that between the churches conversations and dealings based upon a common cause may become possible. It is not the cause of a single church, of a single denomination, of a single nation or theology, but it is God's cause which concerns the church universal. That is the innermost purpose of Stockholm and also of Lausanne. If this purpose were a thousand times misunderstood, falsified, dissolved or changed into administration and other practical problems, it would yet remain the actual ecumenical motive which, in fact, has already produced a crisis within every self-isolating church, every church-nationalism and every narrow confessionalism. Here, exactly here, is the place where Barthianism has its special word to utter, where it may exercise faith, converse and be of assistance in order that God's Cause may actually remain at the center of our attention. This theology has through its own growth extended itself into Ecumenical problematics and feels obliged to cause its message to be heard in numerous countries and churches. Therefore it also, even as the Ecumenical Movement, finds itself confronted with the duty which compels it to proceed beyond the church boundaries and to carry on a discussion with others within the confines, however, of the cause itself. Yes, but

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

how can this be done? Here another point of contact becomes evident. The second question is that regarding the preaching, the education in and the mediation of the Word.

Barthianism, like the Ecumenical Movement, is finding out that it is no simple matter for one country or one church to converse with another. America, for example, does not yet understand the language of Barthianism nor its line of thought, nor its problematics, and it therefore considers Barthianism's influence upon the present American church as a "destructive" one. If Karl Barth is thus simply "let loose upon America" (as the *Christian Century* states), then a great part of America will simply turn away without any appreciation and will not have the slightest idea that the distress of which Barth and Brunner speak is already deeply imbedded in American life.

Mediation is consequently necessary. To be sure, Jesus can even pass through locked doors, yes, but only *He* can, not we! Not even if we preach His Word. Immediate experience, including that of Barthianism, teaches us that men, even when passing on the message of Christ, cannot dispense with spiritual bridges, education, a method for clarification and for an inner preparation. For this neither theology nor social ethics is in itself sufficient. God speaks the language of every person and of every church. But even when by His commission we talk to each other (in the

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

matter of education, for example) we have need not only of the Word, but of words, that is, aids for our stammering about God. And further, in order even to approach the ecumenical problem there are necessary certain psychological procedures, historical aids, an exhibition of common interest in practical and church matters, in theology, a guidance into a common understanding of the concrete world situation, mutual acquaintance and spiritual proximity. With this we do not deny that God does everything alone. Barthianism might, therefore, become a help, a "bridge-theology" because it does not proceed from a national or confessional heritage but rather from God's concern about man, which must become alive in churches and theologies. The more Barthianism extends itself, the more it, too, will get into the self-same difficulty of mediation, the distress of not understanding one another. But distress makes for fellowship.

Thirdly, the Ecumenical Movement is everywhere occupied with a revision of the predominating concept of the church in both its spiritual and its sociological aspects. Though it be true that Christianity can learn to know the immediate nature and functioning of the church only in the small and limited denomination, yet it must be insisted upon that the idea of the ecumenical, that which transcends the world, and that which comprehends in itself the world and the churches, shall not be lost from the concept of the

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

church. In this fashion and without any thought of worldly greatness or worldly power, a portion of church *eschatology* is also kept alive within the Ecumenical Movement, because nowhere and never can the ecumenical be immediately and concretely realized. On the other hand, however, it may not be judged as church "nominalism," for it acts upon the church world with the attracting power of a divine goal lying before us. If Barthianism will also lend its help to rebuild the church once more as "subject"—and this before it strays off and loses itself among the "objects" of its work—it will have rendered the Ecumenical Movement a necessary service with its criticism of the existing church in the interest of that higher and more comprehensive church which is an ideal of faith.

A fourth point of contact would be found in reaching a decision as to what, under the insistence of God's Word, is to be done immediately. No Christian theology will ever successfully evade the question, "What then shall we do?" Not unless it wants to encourage us in laziness or in a dreamy state of waiting. We cannot deny it. Lazarus is lying before our door. From his corner an immediate and urgent divine appeal can be heard. The Bible pronounces the same "woe" upon us whether we fail to hear the word of God or the cry of a brother. Christian faith is obedience as well as trust. The Ecumenical Movement, as well as Barthianism, is an admonition to the

## THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

churches, so that in their faith both obedience and trust will not be forgotten.

The Ecumenical Movement and Barthianism alike place the churches in a critical and tragic situation, for which there is but one and the same solution. Both movements lead the churches to a realization of the crushing immensity of world problems transcending all human criteria and to the conviction that in this situation there is no other help than in turning to God.

In their interwovenness with the world and their rushing activity it becomes clear to the individual churches that no empirical church through its will and its social work, be they ever so honest and enlightened, can offer a solution; they are realizing that, proceeding from their will and upon the basis of their work they simply cannot save the world. Their tragic situation is this, that they are approaching a task with the consciousness that it is too great, too difficult, too heavily charged with demoniac power, but that in spite of all this they have to undertake the task because it is the call of the hour, the demand of the Spirit, and because their knowledge of the Gospel requires them to do so. And that is probably the situation in which Barthianism would like to see the churches, in a situation, namely, which humanly speaking is impossible. It points out, in fact, the very limitations of the church and its ability, and points to that God who alone is able to meet this situation. The

## KARL BARTH AND CHRISTIAN UNITY

Ecumenical Movement enters the field with no finished solutions whatever and with no sense of power, but solely because God is ever present, because one may ever hope for His coming into human darkness, into our inadequacy and despair, because we believe in the Holy Spirit who has been promised to us. *Veni, Creator Spiritus!*

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